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**„EFL between tradition and innovation: focus
on COOL –
cooperative open learning“**

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Abstract

This diploma thesis deals with new teaching methods in contrast to traditional ways of teaching with special attention paid to foreign language teaching. The main goal of this paper is to discuss the new teaching concept - called COOL - cooperative open learning, and its implementation at Austrian schools.

The first part explains different aspects of traditional teaching with focus on lecture-style teaching. The second part deals with two ways of foreign language teaching and learning, namely, learner autonomy and task-based language learning. Following that the reader is introduced to the American educationalist Helen Parkhurst and her Dalton plan. COOL is said to go back to the Dalton plan. Both methods follow the same educational principles but differ in the way they are implemented in daily school life. Afterwards case studies of three different vocational schools in Austria where COOL is implemented are presented. In order to deliver empirical data about the status quo of these methods questionnaires were handed out, which were filled in by COOL teachers and students. The results of these surveys presented subsequently do not indicate a clear recommendation neither for the implementation of COOL nor its rejection. As a conclusion one can say that COOL is an enriching new teaching method especially with regard to foreign language teaching when combined with traditional methods and ways – as it is the case at Austrian schools.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Gegenüberstellung von progressiven Unterrichtsmethoden und traditionellen Formen der Unterrichtsgestaltung, wobei ich spezielle Aufmerksamkeit auf den Fremdsprachenunterricht richte. Das Hauptziel dieser Arbeit ist die Vorstellung einer neuen Unterrichtsform - genannt COOL - eine Abkürzung für kooperatives, offenes Lernen, Weiters eine Erläuterung zu dessen Praxis an österreichischen Schulen und dessen praktische Anwendung im Englischunterricht.

Der erste Teil dieser Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit verschiedenen Aspekten des traditionellen Unterrichts, besonderes Augenmerk wird dabei auch auf den traditionellen Frontalunterricht gelegt. Im zweiten Teil werden zwei neue Methoden im Gebiet des Fremdsprachenunterrichts, genannt „learner autonomy“ und „task-based language learning“ erörtert. Im darauffolgenden Kapitel wird eine wichtige Vorreiterin im Bereich der alternativen Lehrmethoden vorgestellt, nämlich die Amerikanerin Helen Parkhurst und der von ihr entwickelten „Dalton plan“, auf dessen Grundprinzip COOL basiert. Beide beschriebenen Methoden, Dalton plan als auch COOL, folgen denselben edukativen Prinzipien, allerdings unterscheiden sie sich in der Art und Weise ihrer Anwendung im Schulalltag.

Danach werden Fallstudien über drei berufsbildende Schulen in Österreich präsentiert, an denen COOL praktiziert wird. Um empirische Daten über den Status Quo dieser praktizierten Unterrichtsmethode zu erlangen, wurden Fragebögen für LehrerInnen und SchülerInnen, die COOL anwenden, erstellt. Die Auswertung dieser Umfragen liefert keine eindeutigen Ergebnisse im Hinblick auf die Empfehlung zur Einführung von COOL als alternative Unterrichtsmethode, noch zu dessen Ablehnung. Schlussfolgernd kann man sagen, dass COOL eine sehr bereichernde, neue Form des Unterrichts darstellt, speziell im Hinblick auf den Fremdsprachenunterricht, wenn sie - wie im österreichischen Schulwesen – mit traditionelleren Formen der Unterrichtsgestaltung kombiniert wird.

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List of abbreviations

BA	Business Administration
(B)HAK.....	(Bundes)Handelsakademie
(B)HAS	(Bundes)Handelsschule
BWUP	Betriebswirtschaftliche Übungen
BPQM	Businessstraining, Projekt- und Qualitätsmanagement
cf.....	confer/compare
COOL.....	Cooperatives Offenes Lernen
ENWS	Englisch einschließlich Wirtschaftssprache
et al.....	and others
IFOM.....	Informations- und Officemanagement
IT	Informationstechnologie
L&L.....	Live and Learn
NB	number
PBSK.....	Persönlichkeitsbildung und soziale Kompetenz
PE	Physical Education
Prof.....	Professor/in
TBA.....	Task-based approach
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

1 Introduction

As far back as the history of language instruction and teaching in general goes, conscientious teachers and educationalists came up with new ideas how schools could be reconceived and designed differently. They have always been confronted with different issues about improvements in instruction programs, especially in language instruction programs, to raise the quality and effectiveness of their teaching. This was one of multiple reasons why I decided to write about innovative forms of teaching, in general, as well as with regard to language teaching. Further reasons that led to my decision to investigate this topic in detail are described in below.

When I was a student myself, I was taught in a traditional way and went to a conventional school. During the course of my study, I only observed traditionally planned lessons. Since I am a novice teacher myself, I am very interested in alternative ways of teaching. Questions such as how new concepts can be implemented in schools have always been of great interest to me. Therefore, I decided to put the main focus of my diploma thesis on progressive forms of teaching. To go into more detail, I decided to dedicate my diploma thesis to the investigation of one applied approach to progressive teaching in particular, namely the method of “cooperative open learning”, which is called COOL in Austrian schools.

My diploma thesis consists of four essential parts. The first part explores traditional ways of teaching and what it actually is that is criticized in this respect from various sides. When analyzing these aspects, I also try to elaborate on the teacher’s point of view concerning traditional ways of teaching in order to illustrate their reasons for still practicing these traditional methods.

The second part of this thesis discusses “trends” in second language acquisition research as a counterpart to the chapter on traditional ways of teaching. The idea that students need to be able to take control over their own learning to be successful at school, but also to learn independently outside the class, has become very important

in language teaching. An approach called “task-based language learning” is elaborated on in the second part of my thesis as well due to the fact that it includes elements that can support the development of autonomous learning skills.

The third part of my thesis deals with one person which is of great importance in the context of progressive teaching, namely Helen Parkhurst. This chapter gives an insight into Helen Parkhurst’s life and discusses the theory and underlying beliefs of her pedagogy in detail. The reason why I choose Helen Parkhurst as an example of educationalists in favour of innovative teaching is the fact that an Austrian alternative form of teaching is based on her principles.

The fourth chapter deals with this new form of teaching which is called “COOL”. COOL is practiced in Austrian vocational schools and I chose three schools in different parts of Austria in order to be able to exemplify how COOL can be implemented. Insight into the work of Austrian vocational schools, where COOL is practiced is given.

Finally, the last part is the empirical part of my thesis and is dedicated to the analysis of questionnaires I distributed among teachers and pupils of different ages and different years of teaching experiences at these three schools. The aim of the questionnaire is to learn more about what teachers and pupils think about COOL and how it is implemented. It also illustrates what they think about practicing COOL in the English lesson.

2 Methodology

This chapter on methodology should provide a detailed account of how research is structured and the way information was gathered. Furthermore it should give insight into all the researching methods used. Therefore I would like to discuss the different parts of my thesis, mention the different methods of data collection used, and try to clarify why I have chosen particular methods over others. The diploma thesis on hand can be separated into three major parts:

- a) theory part
- b) empirical part, case studies: HAK Steyr, HAK Stegersbach, HAK Donaustadt
- c) questionnaire study: teachers and students

The principal aim of my research was to explore the field of progressive education and to analyze one specific approach to progressive education in particular. I decided to further analyze Helen Parkhurst's teaching methods and a subsequent, new teaching method in Austria called COOL, which relates back to Parkhurst's so called Dalton plan. The central research question of this thesis therefore is: How can alternative forms of teaching like "COOL" be implemented in the Austrian school system? This paper also examines what kind of advantages new teaching methods bring along, and finds out more about teachers' and students' opinions concerning alternative ways of teaching. Most importantly, this study tries to analyze how new concepts of teaching can be implemented into the English language learning classroom.

2.1 Theory research

The first part of my thesis is an exploratory descriptive study. This theoretical part examines the theoretical construct of new, open forms of learning and teaching. In this study, I will also investigate in some detail new concepts of teaching and learning English as a second language. However, specific attention will be devoted to Helen Parkhurst's Daltonplan and a new teaching method in Austria, called COOL. Data for this part of my diploma thesis is gathered exclusively through a comparative literature research. The chapter provides a summary of this literature research.

2.2 Case studies

Case studies can be described as forms of qualitative, descriptive research. The reasons why I decided to do case studies is that case studies are described as being "strong in reality" which means that this kind of field research investigates - in my case - schools within its real-life context. Furthermore, it is said that they expose unique features that may otherwise be lost in larger scale data. (Adelman & Kemmis & Jenksins 1980)

Before I initiated any contact to any school, I had a look at several school homepages which offer COOL and tried to ascertain if these schools also use this concept for language learning lessons. In a next step, I decided on three schools for further investigation: HAK Steyr, HAK Donaustadt, and HAK Stegersbach. All three schools are known as networking-partners which implies, that six COOL-quality criteria, which will be described later on, were fulfilled. Then I compiled a set of questions about aspects I wanted to learn more about. However, when contacting the responsible COOL-coordinators at these schools and talking to them, I realized very soon that most of the information was gathered through simple conversations, without paying too much attention to sticking to the questions. This is also the reason why not all parts of the chapter "case study" are structured in the same way. Nevertheless the three different school descriptions have some parts in common. Commonal-

ities are how the particular school started COOL, reasons for innovation, as well as how COOL is implemented there. In addition to that, there is another common ground, namely that all three contact persons talked about their visions for the future.

Data for this chapter was gathered in the following way:

- Observations of COOL(-English)-lessons
- Meetings with (English) COOL-teachers
- Conversations: telephone calls, emailing;

I had the chance to visit one school, HAK Stegersbach, personally and get an insight into the daily school life where COOL is practiced. Apart from that, I also had a chance to see the extra rooms provided for COOL lessons and I was not only given the opportunity to talk to COOL teachers, but also to students who practice COOL at this school. Talking to students who practice COOL was very informative because one objective of these observations was to check how much students (but also teachers) like their new, more active role as learners in the learning process.

With regard to the two other schools, HAK Steyr and HAK Donaustadt, I regret that I could not visit these schools. Nevertheless, it was no problem to gather information about these institutions. With the help of modern technology, it was actually quite easy to stay in touch with them on a regular basis. Countless emails, as well as phone calls, helped me to do my research. Therefore I want to thank teachers, students and principals of these three schools for their great help – all of them were really patient and highly helpful when it came to answering my questions and filling in my questionnaire.

Case studies fall under the category of qualitative research besides many other methods and approaches. According to Denzin et al. (2003), qualitative research

studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. They further explain:

The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meaning that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. (Denzin et al. 2003:13)

According to Denzin et al. one stresses the socially constructed nature of reality when doing qualitative research. Compared to quantitative research, one can say that qualitative research gathers information in a non numerical form. Although qualitative research is usually said to be descriptive data and as such, harder to analyze than quantitative data, this kind of research is on the other hand quite useful for studies at the individual level. Moreover, it helps to find out, in depth, the ways in which people think or feel.

2.3 Questionnaire

The population for this study consists of teachers and learners who practice COOL at the three vocational schools mentioned above. In general terms, questionnaires can produce both quantitative and qualitative information, which holds true for my questionnaire too. In the designing phase, I decided against using only one form of questions, but rather to use two kinds of question modes, namely closed questions and open-ended ones. Data gathered through closed questions on a questionnaire can generate quantitative data, as these types produce either numerical data or data that can be put into categories, for example, “yes” or “no” answers. According to Cohen and Manion (2007), questions requiring a “yes/no” response are also called dichotomous questions by some researchers. This kind of question is useful because they provide a clear, unequivocal response.

With regard to open-ended questions, McLeod (2008) states that they can generate qualitative information as they are a descriptive response. They are very useful if

the possible answers are unknown, or if there are so many categories of response that a closed question would contain an extremely long list of options. Since it is also said that open questions enable participants to write a free account in their own terms, as well as to explain and qualify their responses, it was clear for me that they might be advantageous, especially with regard to the teacher's questionnaire. The following statement does not just hold true for teachers, but also for students.

... the space provided for an open-ended response is a window of opportunity for the respondent to shed light on an issue or course. Thus, an open-ended questionnaire has much to recommend it. (Cohen 2007:331)

This argument was decisive enough for me to decide to choose open-ended questions, in any case. When writing the questions for the questionnaire, I received support from one COOL-teacher, Ms Gertraud Krammer, who designed several school-internal evaluation questionnaires herself. Moreover, I was supported by another COOL-teacher in practice, Ms Annau. Helen Parkhurst's book, "Education on the Dalton plan" (1922), can be seen as another source of guidance for me when designing the questionnaire. In her book, several questions are listed which Parkhurst asked to students of Dalton schools. As can be seen in the analysis part (beginning at page 90), I also gave examples of quotations from the questionnaire in order to illustrate points of analysis.

3 Traditional ways of teaching

The term “traditional teaching” raises the question what it actually describes and how it can be defined, since it is an elastic and ambiguous term.

First, I would like to point out that usually the term, “traditional teaching” refers to the “usual way” lessons are taught and the way most of us know it from our experience at school, no matter if it is a content subject or a language subject. Due to the fact that this is vaguely worded, I would like to describe certain characteristics of traditional teaching.

The traditional European school type is marked by the schemata of abstract and general equality. According to Novak (1998), traditional teaching is concerned with the teacher being the controller of the learning environment. Therefore the method most often used is the teacher-fronted one. With regard to student activities, one can say that they are only rarely part of traditionally planned lessons. The teacher usually occupies the active role of the lesson. In common traditional lessons, the only activity on behalf of the student is answering questions which were posed by the teacher. Power and responsibility are held by the teacher who can be seen as the decision maker. Novak explains that teachers often regard students as having “knowledge gaps” that need to be filled with information. The traditional teacher usually claims that it is the teacher that causes learning to occur. (Novak 1998:24) Concerning students’ learning processes and experiences, it can be said that learning is competitive in nature. The competition is usually between students, as Theroux (2002) explains, when “students resent others using their ideas”. Furthermore it is believed that students master knowledge primarily and sometimes solely through drill and practice. The lesson’s content and delivery are considered to be the most important aspect of learning. As a last point Theroux mentions that in traditional classrooms content are not necessarily learned in context (cf. Theroux 2002).

With regard to the traditional learning environment, learning is considered as specifically orientated from teacher to student and this is also reflected in the classroom layout. The most common seating arrangement for this kind of setting is for students to sit in rows. Furthermore, teachers who are keen on traditional teaching methods usually think that learning only takes place within the classroom (cf. Novak 1998).

Apart from traditional ways of teaching, there are open forms of teaching and learning as well. Progressive educationalists criticize the way children are taught in most conventional school systems where teacher-fronted classrooms, this way of teaching is also called lecture-style teaching, are common practice. Therefore, I would like to question why this form of teaching is still so popular among teachers and what they consider so positive about this form of teaching. Then I would like to mention some of its drawbacks and discuss them. In order to do so, I would like to present the point of view of researchers and educationalists.

3.1 Lecture-style teaching's advantages and disadvantages

There are conflicting opinions about advantages and disadvantages of lecture-style teaching methods. However, for many people, teacher-fronted teaching is a term with negative connotations. Meyer (2001) defines it as:

Frontalunterricht ist ein lehrgangsförmiger, zumeist sprachlich vermittelter Unterricht, in dem der Lernverband gemeinsam unterrichtet wird und in dem der Lehrer – zumindest dem Anspruch nach – die Arbeits-, Interaktions- und Kommunikationsprozesse steuert und kontrolliert. (Meyer 2001:94)

Meyer (2001) enumerates several characteristics of this form of teaching. The most obvious one is the fact that the teacher takes over the task to control and evaluate everything that happens during the lesson. Spontaneity, creativity and working together are only permitted in limited ways for students. The only conversation which is welcomed during the lesson is when the teacher asks a question and the student is

supposed to answer. Children often feel suppressed, whereas teachers are often described as being overpowered. The topic of a traditional lesson is always thematically organized and structured. Typical teaching aids are the blackboard, schoolbook, exercising books, overhead projector and power point presentations nowadays. (Meyer 2001:94-95)

As already mentioned before, it is quite obvious that lecture-style teaching is teacher-centered. Teacher-centeredness can of course be advantageous in many situations. A positive aspect which is often pointed out by teachers is that “frontal teaching” allows the teacher to present a new topic in a clear and understandable way, as well as offers the opportunity to bring continuity and serenity into the learning and teaching process. It is also quite advantageous for introducing rules of communication and for discussing social conflicts. Since the teacher is supposed to have the overview of the whole class, evaluating student’s work and active collaboration with the students during the lesson is considered to be easier than it might be in open learning phases (cf. Meyer 2001).

However, there is one decisive argument against lecture-style teaching, namely the fact that this way of teaching is hardly appropriate for enhancing autonomous learning. As a consequence, this means that the student is dependent on the methodical skills of the teacher. It is often the case that a lesson, where teacher-fronted teaching is practiced, is very boring for students, since their only task is listening to what their teacher says. This leads to all kinds of distractions:

Typisch für Frontalunterricht ist denn auch ein hohes Maß an – tolerierten oder nicht mehr tolerierbaren – Schüler-Nebentätigkeiten. [...] Man kann geradezu als Faustregel formulieren: je verkopfter der Unterricht, umso höher das Ausmaß an Nebentätigkeiten. Die Schüler erobern sich eben die verlorene Ganzheitlichkeit des Lernens durch ihre Nebentätigkeit zurück. (Meyer 2001:97)

Apart from disciplinary drawbacks mentioned, there are several more to come. Critics of teacher-fronted classrooms frequently claim that a traditional teacher reinforces the student’s conception of the teacher’s authority.

Aschersleben describes that:

Autorität – also auch die des Lehrers – wird grundsätzlich mit Repression, also Zwang und Unterdrückung, identifiziert; der Lehrer als der fachlich, didaktisch und menschlich überlegene Bildungsexperte wird bekämpft. (Aschersleben 1985:30)

Another point of criticism is that lecture-style teaching does not allow students to act out their individuality. Besides that, the student learns receptively when the teacher practices teacher-fronted ways of teaching, which means that it is all about the cognitive processing involved in comprehending oral or written language. According to Aschersleben (1985), this again means that there is no spontaneous and participatory active learning. Receptivity counts as “unpedagogical” because it is against the principle of autonomy and independence concerning the learner. When a lesson with small-group interactions was analyzed and a lesson where teacher-centeredness was the only way of teaching used, the following conclusion was drawn:

1. The potential of small-group interaction for developing the pupil’s oral proficiency is greater than that of frontal teaching because small-group interaction allows for active participation by several pupils at a time.
2. The discourse potential of small-group interaction is greater than that of frontal teaching. (Sørensen 1985:43)

This analysis clearly shows that, not only with regard to the development of the discourse potential this way of teaching has its drawbacks, but also from a sociolinguistic point of view, there are several negative aspects. To briefly mention the most likely important aspects missing, one can name self chosen interest, independence, freedom and self determination. What is also quite interesting concerning the debate about positive and negative aspects of “frontal teaching” is that it is always a teacher’s point of view, but never the opinion of the learners themselves, which is presented to the class. A last point which is gaining more and more attention is the fact that traditional ways of teaching do not allow for individual enhancement (cf. Aschersleben 1985).

In fairness, one has to say that there are certainly a number of reasons why lecture-style teaching is still commonly-used. This means that teachers who frequently use it have their reasons for it, which is described in the next section.

3.1.1 Teacher's arguments

There are usually three kinds of arguments for lecture-style teaching on the part of teachers. First of all, teachers claim that they are not able to teach the students the scheduled syllabus without using this traditional method of teaching. Guidelines and norms for the A-level/high school diploma determine a certain amount of content taught in lessons and this would hardly be reached just with group-work, open learning and project work. In other words, teachers say that lecture style teaching saves time.

The second argument is that teachers often use this traditional way of teaching because pupils are unsettled and the number of students who have problems with behaving in an appropriate way at school is rising. Besides that, it is said that learners become more and more individualistic. It is claimed that only a teacher-fronted way of teaching can make it possible for the teacher to control the whole class and it facilitates disciplinary measures of the teacher. At this point Meyer's explanation is worth considering:

Nur im Frontalunterricht kann der Lehrer Normen und Spielregeln der Zusammenarbeit einführen und ihre Einhaltung kontrollieren. Aber auch hier kann und muss die Gegenrechnung aufgemacht werden: Frontalunterricht leistet die Disziplinierung der Schüler und Schülerinnen nur in einem oberflächlichen Sinne – nämlich so lange, wie der Lehrer im Klassenraum ist. (Meyer 2001:100)

Although Meyer admits that it will be impossible for a teacher to relinquish traditional teacher-centeredness in a classroom where pupils do not conform to discipline, he also says that “frontal teaching” hinders the self-disciplining of pupils.

The third positive aspect is that teachers simply like it. It gives them a satisfying feeling when they see how their pupils understand the taught syllabus. Of course one could also argue that their pleasure would even be more intense when seeing positive outcomes which were achieved by group-work or open learning because these positive outcomes presuppose more demanding planning (cf. Meyer 2001).

3.2 Traditional English language teaching

In the past, the view of learning and teaching a second language, as well as the use of language, was dominated by the importance of forms and structural rules. A typical method was the so called “grammar-translation-method”, where the view of teaching and the use of language were dominated by the importance of forms and structural rules. It was mainly about students translating entire texts, word for word, and memorizing grammatical rules and exceptions, as well as enormous vocabulary lists. As we have seen, the traditional kind of classroom organization is a teacher-fronted one. Students sitting in rows facing the teacher, spend most of their time repeating and manipulating models which are provided by the teacher and the textbook. An improvement is needed and that target could be reached through a change of emphasis from foreign language teaching to learning. Here again, the bottom line is that there needs to be a change of focus from the teacher to the student if the goal is somehow to help our students to acquire an adequate control of a second language (cf. Wardhaugh 1972:9).

When it comes to the development of oral skills, it is often the case that they are acquired in exercises where students have to talk together in unison and repeat what the teacher says. Nunan (2010:3) claims that students in grammar-translation classrooms, for example, typically spend years learning English and many of them will never be able to use the English language effectively. Learners then often know much about the language, but are unable to use this knowledge to communicate appropriately. Students of such classrooms do not learn how to express their own ideas and to share these ideas by communicating in small groups. What they have is a

basic foundation of language knowledge learnt by reproducing and copying language, but they do not know how to put that knowledge to active use. Students are cast into passive, reproductive roles. Nunan (2010:3) states that teachers should better try to help them to communicate and use that language knowledge. Researchers and educationalists are gradually recognizing and accepting that a new approach to language learning and teaching is needed. Nunan puts it the following way:

Learners needed to understand that language is not just a list of grammatical patterns and a collection of words. Language as communication involves the active use of grammar and vocabulary to listen and read effectively and to speak with and write to other people. Language needs to be learned functionally so that learners are able to see that different forms communicate different meanings. (Nunan 2010:20)

In this context remains the question about what happened to the roles of traditional teachers? The answer is that teachers had to realize that there was the need to adopt a new role in the way they bring about student learning. In earlier times, it was usually the case that the teacher controlled all language in the classroom as Davies describes it:

The teacher was in charge of spoken language, determining who could speak and for how long. Unsurprisingly, teacher-talk dominated, with students having little opportunity to practice their own language skills, other than answering teacher-initiated questions. (Davies 1996:110)

As research has shown, it is important for language learners to provide opportunities for using spoken and written language as a means of thinking, planning, developing and expressing their own learning. This means that the teacher is no longer the controlling and dominating language expert in the classroom. Students require “a sense of ownership in the ways they used language in interactive communication situations, in order for new learning to take place”. (Davies 1996)

This does not imply that the teacher passively accepts student's use of language, but he/she is seen as an experienced user of language who:

- can demonstrate particular models of language
- provides appropriate examples
- gives instruction to improve and extend students' understanding of language. (Davies 1996:45)

According to Davies, the teacher is also supposed to be the one who teaches students how language is used to create meaning. Students should be provided with genuine opportunities for using the English language in the classroom and therefore the function of the teacher needs to be changed. He/she is not just the expert any longer, but also the facilitator. He/she is expected to provide teaching contexts which help students using the language. Students should be encouraged to try out new language skills and the teacher should be the guide for them when exploring new knowledge about language. (Davies 1996)

With regard to English language teaching, the concept of learner autonomy is of great importance and will therefore be investigated in more detail in the following chapter.

4 Learner autonomy

In the previous chapters, I dealt with traditional ways of teaching in general, as well as with regard to foreign language learning and teaching. Now I would like to further investigate the concept of learner autonomy for two reasons. First of all, the introduction of the concept called “learner autonomy” is frequently seen as a radical change in language pedagogy and secondly, it is seen as a rejection of the traditional classroom. The introduction of the learner autonomy concept brought along the introduction of new learning settings into the language acquisition context (cf. Benson 2006).

It is said that learner autonomy stems from research on foreign language acquisition, in contrast to other theories on open learning applied in more general teaching contexts which were introduced as a counteraction to traditional ways of teaching. The concept of learner autonomy has been a recurrent theme in language training research over the last decades. Nevertheless, or on account of this, there are many variations upon the basic idea of autonomy in the literature on language teaching and learning. One author who is frequently cited when it comes to the definition of learner autonomy is Holec (1981) because he gave one of the first definitions of what learner autonomy is. He explained that it is the “ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec 1981:3). Lamb & Reinders (2008) further stated that this is a capacity translated into a certain learner behavior labeled “self-directive”, which involves decision making related to learning objectives, choice of learning, activities and self-assessment according to students’ own definitions of learning goals. The term “responsibility” was mentioned several times as well in this connection and is regarded as a central component of the learner autonomy concept.

Holec (1981) said that taking charge of one’s learning meant having the responsibility for the decisions concerning all aspects of learning. In other words, autonomy and responsibility both require active involvement and they are very much interrelated. Besides Holec, there was another researcher some years later who has influenced the introduction of learner autonomy, named David Little. He is probably

best known for his pioneering work on the notion of autonomy in language teaching and learning. Little (cf. 1991) stated that learner autonomy has to do with understanding the purpose of the learning program, accepting responsibility for the learning process and sharing learning goals, as well as taking initiatives in planning learning activities. Furthermore, both Little and Holec also mention the reflection of the learning process as an essential part of learner autonomy.

O'Rourke and Carson (2010) tried to summarize Little's notion of learner autonomy and said that Little argues that the key to the implementation of autonomous learning in the foreign language classroom lies in three principles:

1. Learner involvement,
 2. Learner reflection and
 3. Appropriate language use
- (cf. O'Rourke and Carson 2010, cf. Little 1991).

As a last point to note is that apart from the term responsibility, Lamb & Reinders (cf. 2008) states that the concept of freedom is also essential in this respect.

Why learner autonomy?

As a reason for introducing the concept of learner autonomy, it is very often highlighted that the profile of the second language learner, which had always been a complex and diverse one, underwent fundamental changes as “new societal, cultural, political and professional demands were imposed on the individual” (cf. Macaro in Lamb 2008:47). Little (1999) was more precise when he enumerated arguments for trying to make learners autonomous. He argued that if learners are reflectively engaged with their learning, they might be more efficient and effective. In addition to that, he says that learners who are proactively committed to their learning are more motivated to do so. He admits that learners do not always have to feel entirely positive about all aspects of their learning, but what is decisive is the fact that autonomous learners have developed the reflective and “attitudinal resource” to overcome temporary motivational setbacks (cf. Little 1991).

Scharle and Szabo (2000) write in a similar vein when they say that the reason for the introduction of learner autonomy was frustrated language teachers who invested endless amounts of energy in their students, while getting very little positive results. They write about students who never do their homework, who are reluctant to use the target language in pair or group work, who never learn from their mistakes, and who never listen to each other. They argue that such behavior very often stems from one common cause, namely, the learners' over-reliance on the teacher. The important thing to realize is that language teachers can provide all the necessary circumstance and input, but learning can only happen if learners are willing to contribute. According to Scharle and Szabo (2000) the passive presence of the student will not suffice. Students have to accept that their success in learning very much depends on them having a responsible attitude:

No matter how much students learn through lessons, there is always plenty more they will need to learn by practice, on their own. Also, the changing needs of learners will require them to go back to learning several times in their lives: then again, they will need to be able to study on their own. The best way to prepare them for this task is to help them become more autonomous. (Scharle & Szabo 2000:4)

Autonomous learning resources

If there is a change in the method used in the classroom, there needs to be a change in the choice of materials as well. In other words, materials selection cannot be separated from the methods with which they are used. As it was already stated, the appropriate target language use is of great importance to the concept of learner autonomy. Using the target language as the principal medium of language learning is essential in this respect. For the teacher, this implies that he/she involves learners in good learning activities, which are discussed, analyzed and evaluated together in the target language. Therefore Holec (1997) claims that it is essential to create and/or use appropriate language learning materials in order to foster learner autonomy. Kjisik & Voller (2009) enumerate certain characteristics of autonomous learning materials. They say that materials should be:

1. adaptable materials
2. materials that have not been pre-adapted (but constructed)
3. open-access materials (cf. Kjisik & Voller 2009:41)

Adaptable materials means that in autonomy-driven classrooms, materials should be planned and designed so that each individual learner can reach his/her own learning objectives according to his/her own learning methodology. Therefore materials are used which have not been pre-adapted. Kjisik & Voller (2009) further explains that this is material that has not been pre-adjusted to “precise needs/expectations either in terms of objectives or thematic content, specific levels or particular types of learners” (Kjisik & Voller 2009:41). Furthermore, materials are not pre-adjusted to specific levels and specific methodology constraints, like available time for learning, infrastructural resources, progression and so on. As a last point, there is the talk of particular types of learners. The authors write that materials are not pre-adapted to the learning style of individual learners, neither the pace of learning.

Referring to the last characteristic of autonomous learning materials, one can say that materials need to be available for learners when needed. The expression open-access materials implies that materials are self-sufficient and therefore do not require further explanations on behalf of teachers, while being easily retrievable. Such materials fall into two broad categories, namely constructed, but not pre-adapted materials, and materials to be constructed by the learner. Constructed, but not pre-adapted materials are tools which are constructed with particular learning objectives in mind, but without being pre-adapted to specific learners. Kjisik & Voller (2009) define these in terms of

- a) language competence: keeping up with the news – understanding television newscasts, taking part in small-talk conversations ...
- b) linguistic knowledge: vocabulary, pronunciation;
(cf. Kjisik & Voller 2009:42)

The second category consists of materials without any instruction involved in their use, which means that these materials can be adapted by learners themselves. These materials are on the one hand collections of “bare” oral or written authentic docu-

ments of all sorts and on the other hand, they include also cards suggesting learner activities (cf. Kjisik & Voller 2009, Holec 1997).

Besides numerous websites which offer access to autonomous language learning materials, there are other useful resources. According to Holec (1997), the list of resources for autonomous language learning materials is long and diverse. Of great importance are authentic materials. Quite generally he says that for reading, one should use real life texts like leaflets, posters, newspapers, periodicals, advertisements, brochures, as well as novels. It is also claimed that watching subtitled films, for example, have double benefit because the learner can read the target language and listen to it. Furthermore, one should make use of the internet and interactive multimedia when in search of useful learning materials. Holec also mentions other materials on different subjects in the target language, like working with texts on history. With regard to written skills, simple things like chatting in the internet or finding a penfriend can be very useful.

The question that remains is in how far autonomy-inspired language learning environments can be established in the traditional classroom. According to Errey and Schollaert (2005), Nunan's learner-centered approach is an example of how traditional ways of teaching can become more modern. However, they also mention more recent approaches to learning and teaching, such as task-based language teaching (cf. Errey & Schollaert 2005).

5 Task-based language learning

For the English learning lesson or more generally expressed for any language learning lesson, it is important that students use the target language meaningfully and as often as possible when interacting with other students. This is the case in a new language learning approach, known as task-based language learning, where the focus lies with creating a rather authentic context in which learners have to use their individual second language knowledge in real-time communication in order to achieve a common goal. The primary goal of this approach is firstly, to describe, analyze and predict the language use and the communicative patterns learners are engaged in when accomplishing a task. Secondly, task-based language learning aims at determining the contribution of these communicative patterns to second language acquisition (cf. Eckerth & Siekmann, 2008).

In this respect, it addresses many important aspects which are at centre of attention in second language acquisition research and it is also worth mentioning that task-based language learning and teaching has become known as a subfield of applied linguistics and second language acquisition research. One of the main reasons, why task-based language teaching is important in the context of this paper, is because it is said to be compatible with a learner-centered educational philosophy (cf. Nunan, 2009).

Before talking about the TBA (task-based approach), it is important to define what a task is.

5.1 Defining the term “task”

A task is the core concept of task-based language teaching and its definition has evolved over the last twenty years through empirical research in classroom implementation. Different authors have different definitions based on everything from the

real world to pedagogical perspectives of tasks. Long (1985) defines the term “task” looking at what people usually do in real life:

[...] a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of tasks include [...] filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test,... In other words, by task is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between. (Long 1985:89)

If people are asked to list things they do, these things can be called tasks because these definitions are neither technical, nor linguistic. Such a definition of a real-life task, as the one given by Long, of course needs an adaption to the situation in the classroom, because tasks in real life and pedagogical tasks in the classroom are not to be fully equated. Willis (1996) states several criteria for classroom-tasks. She says that tasks are always activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome. All tasks should have a specific objective that must be achieved, often in a given time. This means that tasks are goal-oriented (cf. Willis 1996). At this point, not all researchers agree with Willis, due to the fact that they think that when a task is brought into the classroom and turned into a pedagogical task, a change takes place. They claim that nobody in the classroom is really worried about buying a ticket, for example, but students then try to build correct discourses by finding the right words to ask for the information needed. Therefore Sanchez (1997) argues:

The “linguistic dimension” of the task is what really matters in the classroom. The primary goal of the task has therefore shifted from its original real worlds value to another one centered on language (not on tickets). (Sanchez 1997: 40)

This discussion clearly shows that it is important to consider the differences between real-world-tasks and pedagogical tasks, and as a consequence, to consider the fact that features that are typical of real world tasks cannot automatically be assigned to and required from classroom-tasks (cf. Sanchez 1997:40). This is the reason why Skehan (1998) puts forward five key characteristics of a classroom-task, drawing on a number of other writers:

- Meaning is primary
- Learners are not given other people's meaning to regurgitate
- There is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities
- Task completion has some priority
- The assessment of the task is in terms of outcome (cf. Skehan 1998)

In general one can say that the definitions of a pedagogical task emphasize the fact that pedagogical tasks involve communicative language use, in which the user's attention is focused on meaning, rather than grammatical form. Furthermore, tasks provide a context that activates learning processes and promotes second language learning and this is also the reason why tasks are a central component of task-based language instruction.

5.2 Task-based approach and its advantages

Although task-based language learning has various defining criteria and theory, TBA (task-based approach) is far from being uniform. Nevertheless it has strengthened the following principles and practices:

- A needs-based approach to content selection
- An emphasis on learning to communicate through the target language
- The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation
- The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself
- An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning
- The linking of classroom language learning with language use outside the classroom (Nunan 2009: 1)

Traditional language learning approaches define in advance what the learners must learn. In other words, the syllabus is defined from outside. In autonomous approaches such as the task-based language learning approach, assumptions are different. Here, the learners regulate the process of learning by themselves, autonomously.

Therefore - in contrast to students of traditional English language lessons - students of a task-based language learning classroom are often described as being free of language control. According to Willis (1996), task-based language learners are free to choose whatever language forms they wish, to convey what they mean. Moreover, students have much more varied exposure to language with task-based learning and a natural context is developed. Another advantage is that unlike other second language learners, task-based language learners spend a lot of their time communicating because it is a strong communicative approach and the lesson is no longer teacher-centered. A further positive aspect is that the language explored in a task-based language learning environment arises from the student's needs (cf. Willis 1996, Nunan 2009).

5.3 Task-based language framework

Since tasks usually vary in complexity as well as in focus and language tasks cannot be equated with other tasks, not requiring language usage for its development, some authors recommended the differentiation of three task types. Willis (1996) points out that a so called task-based learning framework consists of three phases: 1. Pre-task, 2. Task-cycle, 3. Language focus. A task should be seen as a component of a larger framework in order to promote constant learning and linguistic development.

With regard to the pre-task phase the most important job for the teacher to do is introducing the language needed for the task and to create interest in doing a task. In the task-cycle-phase the task is selected and students have to fulfill the goals of the task. In this phase learners use the language they know and try to carry out the task as well as to improve their language knowledge. This may take place under teacher guidance but does not have to. Without the teacher's support learners can try out their second language proficiency autonomously during this stage. The third phase, which is called language focus by Willis (1996), is also often referred to as the "post task" activity. In this stage the learners have already reached their goals. They now repeat what has been learnt. According to Willis, the important aspect in this

third phase is the focus on language activities, since focus on meaning should have been the rule throughout the two previous phases:

By this point, the learners will have already worked with the language and processed it for meaning, so they are ready to focus on the specific language forms that carry that meaning. (Willis, 1996:40)

In other words, this third phase provides an opportunity for form-focused work.

Willis also emphasizes the practicability of the task-based language framework because it provides four basic conditions for language learning, namely, exposure, use, motivation and the explicit study of language forms (cf. 1996:40).

This framework should illustrate that task-based language learning is not only about encouraging students to do several tasks, but in order for tasks to cater for the learner's constant linguistic development, a task is embedded in this larger framework.

6 Helen Parkhurst and the Dalton plan

Progressive educationalists from all over the world have introduced new concepts and theories about innovative teaching as a counter reaction to traditional ways of teaching. Helen Parkhurst's Dalton plan is one of the many pedagogical concepts that were developed in order to take action against traditional teaching strategies. Parkhurst tried to make people rethink their concepts of common teaching methods. According to Eichelberger and Wilhelm (2003), Parkhurst's intention of introducing a new teaching method was due to several deficits in the existing school system. Therefore I would like to pay attention to her personal reasons for developing the Dalton plan and I would like to outline the theory of the Dalton plan itself and discuss her pedagogy and the ensuing concept practiced at Austrian schools.

6.1 Helen Parkhurst

Helen Parkhurst was an American educationalist who was born in Durrand, Wisconsin, in 1886. Her childhood seemed to be unaffected by tendencies of modernization. Eichelberger describes her experiences at school in the following way,

Mit der eigenen Schulzeit verband Helen Parkhurst nur wenig positive Erinnerungen. Der Unterricht war gekennzeichnet durch Stillbeschäftigung, Kontrolle der Lernergebnisse und eine rigide Disziplinierung der Schüler. Selbst die damals moderne herbartianische Formalstufenlehre mündet meist in der gleichförmigen Abfolge eines Frontalunterrichtes, der sich in Lehrerfragen und moralisierenden Schlussbemerkungen erschöpfte. In ihrem Hauptwerk „Education on the Dalton Plan“ beschrieb sie später ihre eigenen Schulsituation recht kritisch ... (Eichelberger 2002:15).

It becomes clear that Parkhurst did not have many positive associations with her time as a pupil for various reasons. Usually, lessons were dominated by the lecture-style teaching method with the teacher being the centre of teaching and learning appeared on the agenda.

What bothered Helen Parkhurst most about traditional teaching was the fact that most teachers viewed the learning process from the teacher's point of view instead of considering it from the student's point of view. She says that teachers see this process "durch das falsche Ende des Fernrohres", which means "through the wrong end of the telescope" (Parkhurst in Eichelberger, 2002:23). She was also very annoyed by the fact that schools think too much of curricula and too little about the students. With regard to the curricula she also demands that the curriculum of any school should vary according to the needs of the pupils, and criticizes the existence of a general curriculum (cf. Parkhurst 1922). Apart from that, Parkhurst shared the opinion that children naturally like to learn. According to her, they possess a great curiosity but they must be interested in the subject. Therefore she said that it falls to the teachers and their teaching method to engender this curiosity, however, she states that most educational methods fail to do so (cf. Parkhurst 1922).

Generally speaking, Parkhurst dealt on the one hand with the question how far traditional ways of teaching prepare the student for the future and on the other hand with the here and now. This means how a school sets its sights on the development of the personal and social abilities of the individual student in the present time and not in the future. The "Dalton pedagogy" aims to help students become sincere, open-minded and independent. Parkhurst stated,

To become masters not only of our time and work, but of ourselves, is a real preparation for life. (Parkhurst in Eichelberger 2002:23)

Apart from her personal motivation for working on the Dalton plan, there are also other factors that had a great influence on new ways of thinking.

Besuden (1955) puts it in the following way:

... die sprunghafte industrielle Entwicklung, die zunehmende Spezialisierung im Berufsleben und den auf einen immer größer werdenden Bestand an experimentell erwiesenem Denken gestützter optimistischen Fortschrittsglauben. Dieser sich fortsetzende Wandel der Kultur stellte

speziell der amerikanischen Schule ein neues Feld dringender Aufgaben.
(Besuden 1955:1)

Parkhurst and other reputable pedagogues claimed that schools should no longer be regarded as a scene where processes between teacher and student take place removed from other social aspects of the student's life. Due to these factors and other reasons explored later on, Helen Parkhurst became motivated to develop her own educational plan, which is internationally known as the "Dalton plan" (cf. Eichelberger 2003).

6.2 The Dalton plan

Helen Parkhurst, who was a teacher herself, developed the Dalton plan in 1904. The plan was named after the American city of Dalton in Massachusetts, where the plan was first put into action as an experiment in a public secondary day school (cf. Eichelberger and Wilhelm 2003).

The stimulus for a detailed configuration of what was known as the Dalton Laboratory Plan was precipitated by several issues she encountered during her career as a teacher as well as by her own experience as a pupil as mentioned above. Helen Parkhurst was also influenced by Maria Montessori, who was a true proponent of New Education as an international movement. Montessori and Parkhurst started to work together intensively after Parkhurst had attended a course on "Montessori pedagogy". Parkhurst was later on even promoted to the 'Supervisor of Montessori Teachers in the USA'. From 1918 onwards, Parkhurst concentrated more on her own work and applied herself to the Laboratory plan.

Parkhurst (1922) stated quite generally that the plan aimed to entirely reorganize school life. The Dalton plan no longer dealt with approaches of teaching in the classroom but was oriented towards the pupils and their interests and abilities. Parkhurst's intention was to restructure schools and individualize teaching so that

learning in an individual rhythm was possible. She wanted to shift the emphasis of teaching towards learning:

Im herkömmlichen Unterricht ist es die Aufgabe des Lehrers, der Lehrerin darauf zu achten, dass der Schüler, die Schülerin lernt. Ein wesentliches Prinzip des Daltonunterrichts ist es aber, dass Schülerinnen und Schüler selbst verantwortlich für ihre Arbeit und Ihren Fortschritt sind. (Eichelberger, 2003:31)

Parkhurst described her main aim of the Dalton plan as being the inquiry how teaching and learning may best be adjusted to one another and she tried to offer an answer to the question.

Preconditions

As Eichelberger states, the implementation of teaching according to the Dalton plan requires several aspects of the traditional school system to change. It demands first of all that the instructor outlines the work of the year, the curriculum or the projects in advance, so that each pupil knows the scope and the nature of the work that he/she is expected to accomplish. Pupils accept each unit of work in a contract (cf. www.daltonplan.nl). In the introduction to the Daltonplan Eichelberger writes:

Die Realisierung von Schule als Lebensraum lebendig motivierten Studierens in unmittelbarer Auseinandersetzung mit den Dingen setzt das Zusammenwirken mehrerer didaktischer Einrichtungen und Faktoren voraus:

- die die selbsttätige Arbeit erst ermöglichenden *assignments*,
- die veranschaulichenden und zur selbsttätigen Arbeit anregenden Facharbeitsräume,
- die Rolle des Lehrers als Anreger und Berater und
- das Eigenstudium des Schülers. (Eichelberger 2002:10)

To summarize and expand this statement, one can say that first of all appropriate assignments are necessary in order to comply with the Dalton plan. Furthermore, “group rooms” for different subjects are needed where the autonomous studies of the pupils can take place. Traditional classrooms are redesigned to be what are

called “laboratories” which can be used by pupils of different age groups. Those rooms are equipped with materials that might be helpful for the students’ self-study. Apart from appropriate material, a specialist in that particular subject, or subjects, should be in charge of each laboratory. For the teacher, when preparing the syllabus it is important to be definite and he/she should state the requirements briefly and clearly with given emphasis on the important points (cf. Parkhurst 1922).

According to Eichelberger the Dalton plan was not intended to be a new teaching method but “a way of life” (Eichelberger 2002:17). Parkhurst stressed that her plan is not a system or a method that through ages of use has petrified into a monotonous and uniform shape. It is not a curriculum but practically speaking a scheme of educational reorganization which reconciles the twin activities of teaching and learning (cf. Parkhurst 1922).

Principles by Parkhurst

Although Parkhurst did not want to develop a new method that had to be followed precisely, she had clear principles that had to be and still need to be followed. Nevertheless, her plan can be amended and adjusted and this is also the reason why there are many different variations in different Dalton schools all over the world. In “Education on the Dalton Plan” two basic principles were described by Helen Parkhurst. The two principles were developed in 1922 and were called “freedom” and “cooperation”. These principles were extended three years later. Parkhurst called the third principle “budgeting time”. (Eichelberger 2002:19)

Freedom

The first principle “freedom” is often enhanced by the term “choice” and is then called “freedom of choice” because this is what it is all about. According to Parkhurst, students must be made free to continue their work upon any subject in which they are absorbed without interruption. She thinks that students who are really interested in their work are mentally keener and more capable of mastering any difficulty that may arise in the course of their study. Parkhurst explains the new learning environment:

Under the new method there are no bells to tear him away at an appointed hour and claim him pedagogically to another subject and another teacher. (Parkhurst 1922:19)

Furthermore, pupils have the choice which assignment they want to work on first, they can decide if they want to work on it individually or in groups and they are also allowed to choose where to work. With regard to tools or aids it is also up to them whether they need any.

Helen Parkhurst’s justifies and explains her thoughts,

Ein wesentliches Prinzip des Dalton-Unterrichtes hingegen besteht darin, dass der Schüler selbst verantwortlich für seine Arbeit und seinen Fortschritt ist. Die Gestaltung des Unterrichts (Pensen, Wahlmöglichkeit, assignments usw.) soll im Schüler das Bewusstsein erwecken, dass das Lernen seine Sache ist und nicht die des Lehrers; dass er Verantwortung für sein Tun und sein Leben in der Schule übernehmen muss, stärkt sein Selbstvertrauen und ermöglicht ihm, initiativ für sich selbst zu werden. (Eichelberger 2002:20-21)

As a conclusion, she sums up the first principle by saying that a student will never learn anything thoroughly unless he/she is permitted to absorb knowledge at his/her own rate.

Cooperation

Parkhurst's second principle is called cooperation. It is also referred to as interaction within groups. According to Eichelberger (2002) this principle was important to Helen Parkhurst because she said that in cooperation the students learn to deal with freedom, the students learn to be creative and they learn to see themselves as a part of the community.

Under the old educational school system a pupil can and often does live outside his group, touching it only when he passes in company with his fellows over the common mental highway called the curriculum. (Parkhurst 1922:20)

The Dalton plan presupposes that all students are members of a community and as such they are co-workers who are responsible to and for the whole. Apart from that, Parkhurst argues that education is a co-operative task and this method of education stimulates deepest interest and the highest powers in a student. She also emphasized that the social dimensions of student's work at school take care of themselves as soon as the competitive situation which is caused by traditional ways of teaching is abolished (cf. Parkhurst 1922, Eichelberger and Wilhelm 2003).

Budgeting Time

Parkhurst states that her plan permits students to budget their time and to spend it according to their needs (cf. Parkhurst 1922). Eichelberger describes it in the following way:

Das dritte Lernprinzip des Daltonplanes beinhaltet die Erziehung zu Selbstständigkeit durch die Forderung nach kontrollierter Arbeitsplanung und -durchführung, durch die Forderung nach Selbsttätigkeit des Schülers. (Eichelberger 2002:22)

The third principle is about educating the student to become an autonomous person. Consequently, the student should be able to plan working time or the proportion of effort to attainment.

Having a closer look at the ideas that stand behind the principles, one realizes that:

The Dalton plan elicits a new response from the child's nature by inviting him to undertake the job in a way that appeals to his natural desire to learn things in his own way and even in his own time. [...] he forms the same kind of relationships in his school life that he will afterwards get in his business or professional life. He is learning by trying. (Parkhurst 1922:32-33)

In other words students do not have to struggle under constant direction and restraint.

6.3 Implementation of the Dalton plan at school

In order to think about the implementation of the Dalton plan one has to keep two important aspects in mind: first of all, the necessary preconditions, and as a second point the Parkhurst principles. When it comes to the implementation and the planning of lessons according to the Dalton plan one has to consider its pedagogic aims.

Parkhurst was convinced that she could do something to mitigate the drawbacks caused by traditional ways of teaching. She wanted to reorganize education with the help of a special work technique. The first change she made was the dissolution of classes that were structured in age groups. As already mentioned, classrooms were transformed into what were called subject rooms. These subject rooms accommodated various instruments, plans, tables and manifold books. These rooms were no longer a place where teachers taught their subject but instead they were places where students were given assignments that had to be fulfilled. Another characteristic of the Dalton plan is the contract that students had to sign. This contract compelled them to fulfill their tasks properly, which means according to the rules and before a set time (cf. Eichelberger 2002).

Student's schoolwork is organized in forms of so called contract jobs. As already mentioned in the preconditions, assignments are essential for the Dalton plan. Separate subjects are outlined in the form of weekly assignments in Parkhurst's plan.

These assignments have the function of guiding the student and they allow him/her to pursue his/her interests and learning foci in the particular subject rooms. Assignments also make it possible to turn away from the classical principle of organizing the lesson. When it comes to the basic principle of an assignment, Helen Parkhurst defines it in this way:

Die erste Bedingung eines guten assignments ist, dass es unmissverständlich geschrieben ist, nicht nur mündlich gegeben wird, dass es klar formuliert ist und durch seine Gestaltung dem Kinde deutlich macht, wohin es geführt werden soll. (Eichelberger 2002:11)

The Dalton plan requires that all assignments be written out a month in advance. Moreover, each assignment should be subdivided into four weekly assignments. What they all had in common was that they usually consisted of three phases either distributed across weeks one to three or in phases. Additional work for keen people should always be there.

The Dalton plan also makes arrangements concerning assessment. The control of learning progress is done in a personal conversation between teacher and pupil. In addition to that, there are monthly tests, where set tasks are checked in a written exam. When the teacher can be sure that the pupil has already reached the learning target the next learning workload is handed out. In most of the Dalton-schools grades are given or at least there is some sort of verbal assessment (cf. Eichelberger 2002).

Another important aspect with regard to the assessment of Dalton plan assignments is the recording of learning progress with the help of three graphs. The first one known as the so called “Instructor’s Laboratory Graph”. The subject teacher tracks the number of units that have already been completed by the students. The “Pupil’s Contract Graph” is the second graph, where the pupil fills in the completed units every month. This should be a kind of planning help for teacher and pupil. The third graph is called “Form and House Graph” and it shows all units of the “Dalton-subjects” of one learning group. (Eichelberger 2002:30)

Advantages of the Dalton plan

After the breakthrough of the Dalton plan at several schools, the positive effects it brought with it were soon perceptible. Parkhurst's plan can be given credit for the following advantages which were observed:

... individuelles Lerntempo, erhöhte Leistungen der schwächeren Schüler, größere Verantwortung hinsichtlich der Lernzeit, wachsendes Selbstvertrauen, Eigeninitiative, ein verbessertes Lehrer-Schüler-Verhältnis und ein gesteigertes Interesse an weiterführender Schulbildung. (Eichelberger 2002:17)

Apart from advantages seen from a psychological point of view, there are also other more technical kinds of positive aspects. Through the abolition of traditional teaching and as a consequence of the abolition of a common education for the same age groups, weaker pupils as well as above-average pupils were no longer seen as problems for practical everyday school life. The plan provides equal opportunities for all students as Besuden puts it in the following way:

Die Schule ist nicht mehr auf einen (Durchschnitts-)Schülertypus ausgerichtet, dem die Interessen der anderen zum Opfer fallen. Der schlechtere Schüler bedarf keiner besonderen Aufmerksamkeit mehr, er bleibt nicht zurück[...] (Besuden 1955:11)

Since the school is no longer targeted at the average student, the weaker student does not have the pressure to keep pace with other students. For the above-average student this means that he/she can deepen his studies in his spare time. He is not inhibited to do so by weaker pupils. Another technical advantage is the fact that illness, for example, does not mean that the pupil falls behind. (Besuden 1955:11)

What is probably considered most often as the most important advantage is the fact that the Dalton plan attempts to solve school problems by viewing them from the perspective of the learner.

The implementation of the Dalton plan has to do with an “economic reorganization” of the school, whereby pupils and teachers function to better advantage:

... by its inefficiency in pupils and teachers is reduced to a minimum. It does not add to or change the curriculum; it does not depend upon expensive school plants or elaborate equipment.
(http://www.daltonplan.nl/uploads/media/Artikel_I_Helen_Parkhurst_02.pdf).

Moreover, the Dalton plan subdivides and reduces the large class group and creates a small group of pupils doing intensive work. As a consequence, discussions are stimulated and social influence exercised.

With regard to the teacher one can say that the Dalton plan gives him/her a great opportunity to know the child, an opportunity which he/she can never get in dealing with a class, no matter how much he/she tries, as there is not enough time:

The teacher can, for example, help a child as long as seems necessary because the other children have to work on their own assignments so they do not lose time while the teacher is occupied. (Parkhurst 1922:167)

According to Parkhurst, each individual presents his/her work in a different way and this releases the teacher from a monotonous and set method of teaching.

Another aspect considered quite advantageous is the solution for the problem of discipline. This problem is greatly simplified under the plan. Where the child is impelled to this work by interest he/she will naturally be a better citizen in his/her school (cf. Parkhurst 1922).

Development of the Dalton plan today

In 1922 the propagation of the Dalton plan started. Particularly British educators became the driving force and made the Dalton plan public. Since then, the Dalton plan has been very successful because it has been applicable in various kinds of schools until today. Even in our century, the ideas of Helen Parkhurst are a lasting inspiration for educators all over the world (cf. <http://www.dalton.org/philosophy/mission/past.asp>).

It is often said that the Dalton plan is still used to overcome various issues in today's schools. Schools nowadays appreciate most the fact that it is compatible with diverse pedagogical attitudes of teachers. The method is often described as being flexible regarding changing aims of lessons. This means that the Dalton plan can easily be adapted to the conditions of particular school systems. (Entwicklungsprojekt Business Academy Donaustadt: 21)

Therefore the Dalton plan is well known and is still spreading rapidly today. The Dalton plan is most prevalent in the Netherlands where other methods of teaching can also be found which actually go back to the ideas of Helen Parkhurst. Other Dalton schools can be found in Japan, Australia and in the Czech Republic (cf. www.daltoninternational.com) Generally speaking, the Dalton plan has been taken into account as a basis for various new ways of teaching. With regard to a new "learning arrangement" in Austria, which is called COOL – this abbreviation will be explained in the next chapter- it is said that it was also the Dalton plan which was one of the most influential concepts that helped to develop this new way of teaching.

7 Cooperative open learning

“COOL” is an abbreviation and stands for “cooperative open learning”. It is a model-project that was initiated by a team of teachers from Steyr, Upper Austria. Two persons are of great importance in this context, namely, Helga Wittwer and Georg Neuhauser. Both of them are teachers at HAK Steyr and played an important role with regard to the development of COOL in Austria, based on the foreign role model of Helen Parkhurst and her Dalton plan. COOL has been put to work in their three-year business-oriented school-model, called HAS in Austria, since 1996. In 2000 it was transported over to the Handelsakademie (HAK), which is a five-year type of school leading to a leaving certificate called “Matura”. COOL was first introduced during a development co-operation between schools in the Netherlands and Denmark (cf. www.cooltrainers.at).

Wittwer describes what COOL means for her in an interview with a local newspaper:

COOL bedeutet zehn Jahre Erfahrung mit einem pädagogischen Vorhaben, von dem sich viele Lehrer noch immer nicht vorstellen können, wie es umsetzbar ist: Differenzierung und Individualisierung im Unterricht. (Schliesselberger 2007:3)

Today more than 120 vocational schools are participating, as matters stand in January 2010. The “cool” way of teaching is only practiced at vocational schools in Austria because it is believed that there are pupils who are more heterogeneous in their class-composition than in other general schools (cf. www.hak-steyr.at).

7.1 Reasons for the innovation

COOL started about 15 years ago due to dissatisfaction amongst certain teachers in Steyr. What Neuhauser and Wittwer, who is an English teacher, heavily criticize is the fact that the most common way of teaching in most schools is lecture-style teaching. Apart from other negative aspects concerning lecture-style teaching, they

claim that there are many children who often come from disadvantaged social backgrounds and who need more help and support on the individual level, which is not very often the case in teacher-fronted lessons. What they claim is that heterogeneity demands different ways of teaching and Neuhauser also mentions that there is a change from selection to support (cf. Interview Salzburger Nachrichten, 2007). Therefore one can say that one of the major reasons for introducing COOL was that teachers wanted to react to this increasing heterogeneity in the classroom. Furthermore there was an increasing demand from industry to implement the development of what are known as “soft” skills into school education. This form of teaching is said to offer a targeted education for future employees in soft skills. Furthermore, COOL intends to enhance life-long-learning and also focuses on self- and social-competences (cf. www.cooltrainers.at).

In general, it can be said that COOL is a pedagogical movement towards increased autonomy, personal responsibility and cooperation in secondary education and it is based on several basic approaches of progressive teaching. (www.cooltrainers.at)

7.2 Aims of COOL

One crucial aim of COOL is to give each individual student the possibility to develop him/herself further which, according to teachers who are in favour of student-centered lessons, is not the case in traditional teaching. This means, for example, that COOL aims at improving students’ self-monitoring and the ability to cooperate. In addition to that students have more responsibility with regard to their learning process when practicing COOL. The time when students practice COOL and are therefore supposed to work independently is called open learning and brings several advantages for them. According to Lenz (1998) open learning offers the opportunity for students to learn how to organize themselves and manage their work. They learn how to develop and implement new ideas. In addition to that, they learn to understand written instructions and to put them into practice. Students also learn how to reach a goal through teamwork, to better know their needs and their individual work

rhythm and how to adapt to it. Another crucial aim of free work is that students learn to take responsibility for the appropriate usage of one's working time. Lenz also mentions that they learn to feel happiness and satisfaction after having finished work successfully. It is claimed that with open forms of learning students gain knowledge through an enjoyable method (cf. Lenz 1998).

I would like to summarize with Neuhauser (2005) who explains that COOL aims first of all at the acquirement of soft skills, secondly at the enhancement of individual competences and lastly at the acquisition of "methodische Kompetenzen" as he calls it. Neuhauser exemplifies this and says that self-reliance is an individual competence which is enhanced by practicing COOL. Apart from that he mentions that students, while fulfilling their COOL-assignments, acquire "methodische Kompetenzen" which help them to analyze and understand texts.

7.3 Relevance of soft skills

According to Böttchen and Lindart (2009) the demand for social competences, as they call it, is at the forefront of employer's wish lists with regard to their employees' qualifications. This means that soft skills are not just a temporary trend but a relevant aspect for one's own professional career. Dick (2002) compares social competences with pneumatic tyre because she says that these competences combine different abilities like a pneumatic tyre does. In the literature the term "soft skill" is congruent with the term "social competence" and many other different terms describe more or less the same concept. To give a definition of what is meant by soft skills, I would like to quote Bullinger:

Die Gemeinsamkeit der Begriffe und Bezeichnungen liegt in der Beschreibung von Qualifikationen, die einen überfachlichen Bezug haben und nicht ohne Weiteres in der Schule oder in einem Seminar gelernt werden können, da sie einen außerordentlichen hohen Bezug zum Agieren in (Arbeits)Situationen aufweisen. (Bullinger 2004:8)

The importance of these soft skills is demonstrated in another definition:

„Überfachliche Qualifikationen“ bezeichnen die Fähigkeit und Fertigkeiten, die zur Ausübung einer bestimmten Tätigkeit nicht unmittelbar notwendig sind, aber die Qualität und Effektivität ihrer Ausführung beeinflussen können und zur aktuellen und zukünftigen Beschäftigungsfähigkeit des Individuums beitragen können. (Heeg & Hurtz 1989:20 in Bullinger)

Soft skills are, in contrast to hard skills, which are acquired through the ordinary course of education, more difficult to define. Formal qualifications which can be documented by diplomas and subject-specific qualifications are basic prerequisites for certain jobs, but many companies are not looking for “blinkered specialists”. They want people who offer more than formal qualifications, namely so called “cross-subject qualifications”. Most often, the term is associated with social competences like the ability to communicate, knowledge of human nature, capacity for teamwork and various personal competences. (Bullinger 2004:24)

Reasons for the demand of cross subject-skills qualifications

In general, one can say that changes in the organization of the working world, new approaches to management as well as technical progress have an influence on the development of the demand for qualifications in companies and an impact on the matching process. Schienstock et al. (1999) believe that apart from a certain amount of knowledge and technical qualifications, there are about 5 qualifications that are in increased demand because of economic globalization. He mentions “multi-skilling”, international qualifications, communication, management skills and social competences (cf. Schienstock et al. 1999).

It is often assumed that enhanced competition, demographic change as well as more complex technology has great impact on the management of human resources in companies. In this connection it should not be forgotten that the changing job profiles and requirements could be reasons as well (cf. Sparrow, Hiltrop 1994). Many authors who occupy themselves intensively with research in the field of business

organization claim that in most cases, changes in the structure of an organization are triggered by external pressure. Sparrow and Hiltrop (1994) also mention that one of the chief aims of the design of organizations is to create appropriate combinations of individual competences in order to provide one's own organization with a better capability than that of the competition (cf. Sparrow, Hiltrop 1994). Until now, employees who have those qualifications and competences at their disposal to enable a certain internal, functional flexibility are needed. To accomplish this goal, competences as well as qualifications of employees need to evolve continuously and adapt to change. Nyhan (2001) counts flexibility among other important features, like authority and reliability, as the most important characteristics of a qualified employee.

With regard to the future, experts anticipate an increase in the requirements for future employees. Personnel decisions are dependent on the estimation of soft skills possessed by the applicant. In summary one can say that as well as capacity for teamwork, the facility for cooperation is one of the most frequently mentioned soft skills in interviews concerning the importance of soft skills in the working world of today. According to Edinsel (1998) some employers even prefer distinctive soft skills combined with minor distinctive professional competence than the combination of good qualifications with regard to professional competence but a lack of soft skills. This preference clearly shows the meaningfulness of soft skills in the modern-day working environment. Therefore schools must act upon this information as subject-specific teaching is no longer enough.

Schools and soft skills

Since we all are aware of the need for the advancement of soft skills, it is natural to say that school concepts need to be elaborated. Implicit pressure for educational reform was found by Roth (2006) through the analysis of thousands of job advertisements and parental feedback, which showed that an improvement in the teaching of soft skills is required. Teachers should think about the pupil's future needs. This means that the ideal teaching situation is when teachers anticipate what their learners might need when leaving school and entering the professional world. According

to Böttcher and Lindart (2009), the most important competences, such as being able to work in teams or the ability to communicate, can easily be developed and “improved” at school. Schools belong to the living environment of students and are responsible for preparing students for life. This is also the place where they learn how to cope with other people. According to Böttcher and Lindart (2009), teachers can improve social competences very easily when keeping them in mind. Although nowadays there even exist CD-ROMs which are intended to teach social competences, it is very often claimed that one needs interaction with other people in order to gain soft skills. Wouldn’t it be wiser to train soft skills at school where learners are in direct contact with other people? This is at least what Dick (2002) suggests when she says that social competences can only be acquired in direct contact with other people. If this is not the case she further argues that this is in no sense interactive learning and it cannot be in accordance with real life.

Therefore many schools decide to practice new teaching methods like COOL as an answer to the demands of the working world.

7.4 Features of “COOL”

Cooperative open learning is characterized by several features. Some of them are in connection with the lesson itself whereas others are concerned with teachers and pupils. COOL tries to incorporate parents as well.

Teamwork

Teamwork is one of the essential characteristics of COOL. Although when hearing the term teamwork, one is tempted to think that it refers only to students, COOL team work also includes teachers. When pupils are expected to learn how to work in teams this holds true for teachers as well. They need to cooperate in so called “teacher teams” which requires teacher conferences on a regular basis (Hölbling et al. 2008:4). With regard to COOL students, it can be said that group work makes up

the largest part of the lesson. Whereas in most traditional lessons teachers are responsible for the progress of the lesson, in COOL students take over the active part and sometimes work together in teams of several students.

Assignments

In COOL lessons, written assignments which are planned according to the curriculum by the teacher are handed out for students in several subjects. If it can be arranged, teachers give interdisciplinary assignments to pupils. Work is done using written activities involving several subjects whenever useful. The periods designated as “COOL-lessons” are arranged for students to work on the assignments. These “COOL-lessons” are open learning sessions and are an integral part of the schedule. They can be defined as open because students are free to choose what to do and when. As a matter of fact there are also lessons where they get input from the teacher. (Hölbling et al. 2008:4)

Before teachers compile assignments certain deliberations are necessary. According to Neuhauser und Wittwer (2005), teachers need to have clear notions of what abilities or learning goals they want their students to achieve. A second step concerns the method. The teacher needs to have an idea of how this goal can be reached. A third point deals with the content presented, which means that teachers decide whether this assignment should be interdisciplinary or not. After having considered these aspects there are further elements which need to be thought through thoroughly and should then be mentioned on the assignment sheet. Neuhauser und Wittwer enumerate seven essentials which work as guidelines for the structure of these assignments:

- Organizational frame: title, timeframe ...
- Learning goals
- Methods: group work, individual work, partner work ...
- Materials: questions, cloze tests, crossword puzzle ...
- Details of assessment: how the contents are going to be assessed, what has to be done and what is optional, additional work, for example;
- Feedback sheets

- Contract (cf. Leitfaden COOL 2005)

Example assignments will be provided in the chapter called “Example assignments” starting at page 74.

Role of the teacher

Since a basic rule of COOL is to lead pupils to be more autonomous and to work in teams, the duties of the teacher change. The teacher takes the role of the coach and facilitator. In the role of the coach, he/she acts as a kind of companion in the learning process of the student. According to Hölbling, this brings along the advantage of targeted support of individual pupils along (Hölbling et al. 2008:4). Neither the Dalton-plan nor COOL works with typical traditional roles of teachers. According to Neuhauser (2005), it is important that COOL-teachers are willing to relinquish typical features of the traditional teacher role which were discussed in more detail in the chapters three to six.

Hölbling et al. (2008), mention that this way of teaching offers the chance to communicate with other teachers. The role of the “lone fighter” is replaced by the role of the “team-player” as he calls it. Neuhauser is quite optimistic with regard to the new role of the teacher. In an interview with Hölbling he states that,

Die neue LehrerInnenrolle beginnt schon bei der Vorbereitung: LehrerInnen gestalten Assignments (Arbeitsaufträge), die die SchülerInnen zum selbstständigen Tun anregen. Durch eine differenzierte Aufgabengestaltung kann auf unterschiedliche Bedürfnisse und Fähigkeiten von SchülerInnen eingegangen werden. „Mit allen Sinnen lernen“ ist möglich, der Arbeitsauftrag kann von konkreten Gestaltungsaufgaben über Reflexionen, Übungen bis zu systematischen Aufarbeitungen alles beinhalten. Den LehrerInnen steht viel Freiraum bei der inhaltlichen Gestaltung und Formulierung ihrer Arbeitsaufträge zur Verfügung. Arbeitsaufträge können zudem fächerübergreifend erstellt werden. (Hölbling et al. 2008:11)

Although the role of the teacher changes tremendously and there is a shift from an active to a more passive role, this does not mean that the teacher is completely pas-

sive during free work. He/she observes students and their activities and makes sure that they do not run the danger of working aimlessly. Since the new role of the teacher is often described as that of an adviser it is also important to note that the teacher of course needs to give advice if necessary and to motivate students and encourage them to proceed. It is also essential that the teacher frequently praises pupils for their effort. These points demonstrate that teachers still play an important role in the learning process. (Hammerer 1994:61)

As a conclusion one can say that COOL as well as TBA, both teaching and learning arrangements avoid teacher domination in the (target language) classrooms. The roles of the teachers are similar since in both learning arrangements free interaction is promoted by the teacher. Nevertheless, one must not forget two aspects. First of all, there is still some teacher control in COOL as well as TBA. Topics of COOL assignments and TBA tasks are chosen by the teacher. The teacher also sets the performance and process options and he/she checks if students are working. In addition to that, COOL and TBA teachers comment on students' work and point out errors. As a last point, teachers of both learning "methods" control students' time management since the COOL teacher sets time limits and the TBA teacher decides when to move to the next phase in the task-cycle.

The second aspect that especially COOL teachers have to keep in mind is that there are on the one hand students who seem to be totally successful in their autonomous learning. On the other hand, however, there are students who appear to be strongly dependent on the teachers support. Some students have difficulties learning autonomously and the teacher is supposed to notice this weakness on behalf of the students.

Portfolios and reflection

The process of reflecting is of great importance to COOL. In this chapter I would like to pay attention to portfolios which are commonly used in COOL lessons. Furthermore portfolios exemplify – among other things - what is meant with “students reflecting on their work”. Apart from that, I would like to elaborate on verbal feedback given by the teacher as well as students.

In COOL lessons portfolios (“Leistungsportfolios” in German) are important as a means of performance appraisal. Portfolios are defined in the following way:

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student’s efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection. (Paulson and Paulson 1991:60)

When doing portfolio-work students first of all define their context within which they are working and collect appropriate materials and results/outcomes of various researches they do in COOL lessons. Then students select their learning-products. Goals which are formulated and written down either by the teacher or by the student him/herself are also part of the portfolio. In addition to that feedback which was given by peers is also part of the portfolio. While working on their assignments students document their learning-process and reflect on it. Sometimes students have to adjust their learning goals. In a final step, students present their portfolio to other students and the teacher (cf. Paulson and Paulson 1991).

The increased usage of verbal feedback to students by teachers is essential in COOL-lessons as well because learners and teachers discuss whether goals have been achieved and whether working relationships among group members were effective. Furthermore, students and teachers discuss what the outcomes mean for future cooperation and which individual contributions were productive (cf. Errey & Schollaert 2003). With regard to the teacher, valuable time is released for individual

or group consulting and for observations. The teacher has more time to concentrate on each student and is therefore able to observe learning in action, gathering information about how individual learners as well as groups are doing. Errey & Schollaert (2003) describe the positive aspects in the following way:

Observing student learning, collecting and analyzing information about learners is used as a basis for planning further instructional actions. (Errey & Schollaert 2003:63)

Concerning reflection and verbal feedback, it is important for students to realize the progress they are making in their subjects. In order to enhance this realization, teachers hand out feedback sheets that students have to fill in after finishing their assignments. When doing this, the students are asked to describe their working process and state their personal opinion about the assignment itself as well as the advances they have made. Feedback from the teacher makes it possible to compare a student's self-evaluation with that of the teacher.

Contract

While contracts between teachers and students are not common in traditional teaching, they are known as a typical aspect of COOL. Clear framework conditions and structures, which are discussed at regular intervals in class discussions and pupil-teacher-forums, are fundamental to COOL. Both teachers and pupils work out rules for cooperation and teamwork that are then written down in contracts. After that, teachers and students sign the contract. (Hölbling et al. 2008:5) In case of contract breaches students and teachers can discuss that in the "Klassenrat" which will be elaborated on in the following part.

Class council

Every COOL class should have a class council, which is called "Klassenrat" in German. Although there are guidelines of how often a class is supposed to hold a

class council, it is inevitable that this will vary from class to class and from school to school.

A class council should aim to be:

...a steering-group to solve problems and strengthen communicative skills, a class-council is held regularly with topics that students consider important to be solved.

(<http://www.cooltrainers.at/index.php?id=314&L=1>).

Students do not only talk about their problems and concerns but also practice rules of conversation, techniques of moderation and taking minutes. In addition to that, social skills such as asking for information, clarifying, summarizing, encouraging as well as relieving tension are practiced (cf. Errey & Schollaert 2003). Students usually practice these skills without realizing it as they are concerned with the problem at hand. This situation prepares students for the real working world where conflicts need to be communicated in a mature way.

Inclusion of parents

According to Hölbling et al. (2008), it is important to mention that not only teachers and pupils but also parents are incorporated in COOL-education. According to the Dalton-plan this means that parents meet teachers on a regular basis at teacher-parent-conferences. Suggestions, wishes and apprehensions concerning COOL can be formulated and advantages of teacher-parents-cooperation soon became obvious to COOL initiators (Hölbling et al. 2008:4). They were aware of the fact that working together with parents in the elementary sector (as it is mostly the case in Dalton-schools) meant something else than working together with parents of students who attended vocational schools where COOL was practiced.

With the age of the students the form and intensity of cooperation change:

In der Pubertät und dem damit verbundenen Ablösungsprozess wird den Kindern die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Eltern und LehrerInnen zunehmend suspekt. Mit der Selbständigkeit wächst auch das Bedürfnis eigene Entscheidungen zu treffen und sich der direkten Einflussnahme durch die Eltern zu entziehen. (Hölbling et al. 2008:28)

Neuhauser (2008) claims that parents are extremely important in the phase of puberty, even, if students do not realize that. The main aim of such meetings is:

... persönliche Beziehungen zwischen den Eltern zu ermöglichen, die erfahrungsgemäß dann wiederum die Beziehung der SchülerInnen in den Klassen positiv beeinflussen. (Hölbling et al. 2008:28)

Another aim of these parent-teacher-meetings is to show parents what their children learn in COOL lessons. Presentations of project work or various other performances at these meetings give students the chance to demonstrate what they have learned and to integrate their parents more easily into their COOL experience at school. Experience has shown that parents usually appreciate such events, especially those who were not absolutely convinced of this new teaching arrangement when it was introduced (cf. Hölbling et al. 2008).

eCOOL

In recent years eCOOL has been developed. As more and more Austrian vocational schools allow the use of laptops during the lesson, it is important to work with e-learning platforms. With regard to COOL, this means that students and teachers work with online COOL-assignments. In 2006 there was the start of the eCOOL-initiative to integrate e-learning into the concept of COOL. It is described in the following way:

Ein wesentlicher Teil dabei ist die strukturierte Zusammenführung von eLearning-Paketen mit der Methode des kooperativen, offenen Lernens,

unter Nutzung einer Lernplattform die den Schwerpunkt auf konstruktivistisches Lernen legt. (<http://www.cooltrainers.at/index.php?id=170>)

The main aim of eCOOL is to combine the methodology of COOL with e-learning platforms. Important to note is that COOL initiators see eCOOL in addition to “normal” COOL assignments and not as a replacement. With regard to eCOOL the emphasis is on the development of hard skills, such as the content of the individual subjects, as well as soft skills, such as self-reliance, through the use of electronic aids. Furthermore, it promotes the use of learning platforms that offer modern and multifaceted opportunities for working on assignments. Students can work on their COOL-assignments offline in various “social learning arrangements”. When there is need for communication modern technologies can be used, for example, an Internet forum, the e-learning platform itself, online dictionaries, chat rooms, weblogs and podcasts, just to name a few.

The use of eCOOL also promotes individualization, as individual learners have the possibility to work on learning contents at their own pace. The submission of assignments followed by the reflection of students gets more transparent and easier to handle. Basic rules of eCOOL assignments are described in the following way:

COOL-Arbeitsaufträge die in strukturierter, elektronischer Form mit Zielvorgabe, Terminisierung und Sozialform existieren, erfüllen bereits die Grundanforderungen eines eCOOL-Arbeitsauftrags.
(<http://www.cooltrainers.at/index.php?id=170&L=0>)

One aspect that needs to be considered beforehand is the fact that the regular use of learning platforms usually takes place in laptop classes. This requires certain technical equipment, which constitutes a problem at many schools.

8 Case studies

The previous chapters deal with more abstract aspects of COOL. In order to illustrate COOL from a more practical point of view, I decided to do case studies to exemplify how COOL works in real life.

As already mentioned in the methodology chapter, all three schools are vocational schools in different parts of Austria. All three schools are located in different parts of Austria: one school is located in Vienna, another in Upper Austria and the third in Burgenland. Furthermore, these three schools differ not only in their geographical location but also in their size and in the number of COOL teachers they have.

The first school presented is the HAK in Steyr. I wanted this school to be part of my case study because it is known as the school which initiated COOL. My contact persons were Ms Wittwer, Ms Egger and Mr Neuhauser. Wittwer and Neuhauser are in charge of the management of the COOL-impulse-centre in Steyr and were the driving force for the introduction of COOL in Austria. Ms Egger is responsible for the “live and learn” project at HAK Steyr.

The second school described is the business academy Donaustadt in Vienna. I decided to contact one of the teachers, Ms Eva Annau, of this school because I already knew her from my English studies at university. In a previous term I attended a course at the English department where she held a presentation on COOL. Moreover Annau is important with regard to COOL because she is one of the COOL-coordinators of the COOL-impulse-centre and is responsible for the area of Vienna.

The third school that is part of my case study is the HAK in Stegersbach. Stegersbach is my home town, and when I learned that COOL is also practiced at this school, I was highly interested to learn more about their implementation of COOL. My contact person at that school was Ms Gertraud Krammer who was a driving force behind the introduction of COOL in Stegersbach.

At this point I would like to stress out that all five contact persons as well as other COOL-teachers of these three schools were extremely helpful when it came to answering questions concerning COOL (and “live and learn”) as well as showing me COOL-materials, among other things.

At first I would like to briefly present the schools, mentioning their mission statement and other notable facts. Then I would like to go into more detail as to why COOL was implemented at these particular schools and its initial acceptance. After that I would like to describe the environment in these schools, relate what I have observed and learned from various conversations with COOL-teachers – with special attention to the question of how COOL is applicable to English language teaching. In order to illustrate that some English COOL assignments are discussed. Finally I would like to briefly present their visions for the future.

8.1 HAK Steyr

In connection with COOL, this school in Steyr, Upper Austria is of great importance. As already mentioned several times, this vocational school, which is a HAK – Handelsakademie, started practicing COOL as a pioneer project.

The school is very innovative and is often called a competence centre for business and economic know-how. The school claims that the content and methods of teaching and learning as well as its training facilities are very modern. On the official homepage of HAK Steyr it is said that:

Wir vermitteln eine fundierte Allgemeinbildung. Wir fördern die Entwicklung von Teamfähigkeit, Verantwortungsbereitschaft, Engagement, Eigenständigkeit, Kritikfähigkeit und umfassendem Kulturverständnis. Wir legen Wert auf Achtung und Wertschätzung im Umgang miteinander (cf. www.hak-steyr.at).

What makes HAK Steyr special? First of all, this school has a project which is called “live and learn”, carried out in the first two grades. For the first and second

grade students, i.e. grade nine and ten, this implies that they have an hour daily of so called “Freiarbeit” - in other words, they practice COOL. “Live and learn” will be discussed in more detail on the next page. Moreover, students from the first grade onwards are taught at least one subject in English. This way of teaching is called “Englisch als Arbeitssprache” in German. An English equivalent would be “Content and Language Integrated Learning”, abbreviated as CLIL. This innovation is aimed at improving the English language ability of students and as the school states, “[...], dass Englisch für dich von einer Fremdsprache zu einer Selbstverständlichkeit wird.” which means that English should no longer be regarded as a foreign language but rather as self-evident (cf. www.hak-steyr.at).

HAK Steyr also has “netbook classes” in which students are supposed to work with net-books during lessons. In these “netbook classes” but also in other classes, “blended learning”, which combines traditional face-to-face classroom methods with more modern computer-mediated activities, is practiced.

As one can see from the characteristics mentioned HAK Steyr is a very innovative school. One of the most important aspects is the fact that HAK Steyr is the initiating school of COOL in Austria.

COOL at HAK Steyr

Reasons for the introduction of COOL and its history at HAK Steyr were already mentioned in the introductory chapter of COOL (page 45). Nowadays, 25-30 teachers of a total of 100 teachers practice COOL according to Wittwer. Until the last school year, there were eight COOL classes. From the school year 2011 onwards, the school relaunched COOL and started a new project called “live and learn”. This implies that COOL is even more present in the daily school life of students at HAK Steyr. Before 2011 it was decided by the teacher if he/she wanted to use COOL assignments or not and it was planned by the teacher how often students worked with assignments. With L&L pupils have an open learning phase every day in the third

lesson, which means that they have at least five COOL lessons a week in five different subjects. At the beginning of every school year five subjects are decided to be part of the L&L project. Subjects where L&L is practiced are, for example, English, German, Geography, Biology and Business Studies. After having decided on the L&L subjects for the first two grades, teachers plan a live and learn day per semester where L&L is practiced in addition to the everyday L&L lesson. Assignments where special topics of all five L&L subjects are combined are done on the L&L day. For the next school year this L&L day is planned for the first two grades and it should be organized every semester. A sample interdisciplinary assignment with even five subjects involved is provided in the chapter about sample assignments.

The reason why COOL-initiators have always been keen on improving their implementation of COOL at their school, like the “live and learn” project, is that positive changes were noticeable at an early stage. To give an example, framework conditions, which are provided by this cooperative, open learning, are an ideal basis for interdisciplinary teaching. Neuhauser and Wittwer are convinced that COOL offers the best model of how individualization and the process of differentiation in the educational field can be implemented in the Austrian educational system (cf. Schlieselberger, 2007).

A new way of teaching also needs new areas for studying learning and working. If the lesson is designed for working interactively, one classroom is not enough for all the students to work individually or in different groups. Not only the students need more, or different working areas, but the teachers do also. Some schools where COOL is practiced reserve a room for COOL lessons. This is not the case in Steyr but there are several places in the corridors of the school that can be used by students. This does not mean that students are allowed to go and carry out their assignments wherever they want but they have a certain freedom in their choice of working area. If there are two classes with parallel COOL-lessons, students are al-

lowed to change classrooms on condition that they have the same subject. Wittwer describes the learning places in the following way:

Wenn Klassen parallel COOL-Stunden haben, dürfen SchülerInnen theoretisch auch in andere Klassen gehen (wenn dort z. B. gerade ein anderer Englischlehrer ist.) Das tun sie in ersten Klassen eher nicht, was aber sehr beliebt ist, sind Arbeitsbereiche in Gängen und Nischen, die vertraglich für diese Stunden erlaubt sind. (Interview Wittwer)

At all COOL schools it is a matter of course to hand out so called “evaluation sheets” to students and teachers on a regular basis to get feedback from the students and teachers. An evaluation performed in the last school year at HAK Steyr indicates that since the beginning of working with COOL there has been an increased motivation on behalf of the students and teachers. According to teachers who analyzed this evaluation, social behavior has improved in general and students have a more realistic self-assessment than before COOL. Furthermore, it is claimed that students progress with regard to their development of personality. Concerning their academic achievements it was noticed that students improved in competences relevant to the world of work and that they miss fewer lessons.

COOL–impulse-centre

In 2001 a centre for cooperative, open learning, called “COOL-Impulszentrum”, was founded. The Federal Austrian Ministry of Education sponsored it with the goal of:

... [...] spread[ing] the idea, involv[ing] parents in networking-activities and continuously develop[ing] the concept.
(<http://www.cooltrainers.at/index.php?id=314&L=1>)

The school in Steyr accommodates the COOL-centre that is nationally and internationally active. In 2004 the concepts of “cool-networking-partner” and “COOL-impulse-school” were introduced. In order to become certified as a COOL-impulse-school, certain criteria have to be fulfilled. These criteria were developed in Steyr and HAK Steyr also certifies other schools when all parts of the criteria are fulfilled.

There are six quality criteria known by every COOL school, which should be implemented. The first criterion requires that teachers work in teams and have regular meetings in order to make sure that the cooperation works. In order to meet the second criterion teachers of a COOL school have to do in-service training. The third criterion deals with regular and open learning phases which should be offered for the students, in terms of the Dalton-plan. The fourth one says that written assignments are the basis for autonomous learning. Cooperation enhancement and teamwork are dealt with in the fifth criterion and the last one has to do with public relations. (<http://www.cooltrainers.at/index.php?id=361>)

If a school wants to become a certified COOL-impulse-school it is necessary to fulfill all the quality criteria mentioned. Furthermore, at least two COOL-teachers of the COOL-team have to complete COOL training. The school also needs to be willing to receive visits from other schools that want to become COOL-impulse schools. Apart from the willingness for public relations, the participation at regular nationwide meetings is also demanded. (<http://www.cooltrainers.at/index.php?id=314&L=1%27>).

Since 2004, more than 32 schools all over Austria have become certified impulse schools. This, however, does not mean that only 32 schools work with COOL. More than 80 schools have adopted the system and over 1000 teachers have knowledge of the concept, which means that they partially use COOL during their classroom-work.

At the COOL-impulse-centre in Steyr there are three staff members, with three regional coordinators in Vienna, Linz and Bregenz. When it comes to their activities one can differentiate between three categories:

1. Development of curriculum
2. Further education focusing on social competence and reform pedagogical concepts for teachers in vocational schools
3. Cooperation/networking/information:

- Development, administration as well as support for a school network for innovative approaches
- Cooperation with scientific institutions in Austria as well as abroad regarding information exchange, for example;
- Cooperation with universities with regard to research and development
- Contact with industrial partners to maintain a good connection with local businesses with a focus on practical orientation (in particular: soft skills and social competences)
- Public relations (cf. <http://www.cooltrainers.at/index.php?id=314&L=1>)

Apart from these three categories it is important to mention that of course coaching schools on COOL implementation is one of the most crucial activities of the COOL-impulse-centre.

COOL-English teachers

Since English teaching is of great interest to me I also talked to Ms Wittwer about English lessons at HAK Steyr. In conversation with her she mentioned that English teachers at HAK Steyr like this working structure. The number of “COOL” English teachers is remarkable. From a total number of 15 English teachers, 5 to 7 teachers practice COOL. Wittwer sees the reason for this number in the collaboration among subject teams.

8.2 HAK Stegersbach

Apart from progressive forms of teaching, HAK Stegersbach is described as being innovative in various ways. The aim of the school is to be a multifunctional educational establishment that is able to adapt its aims to those of societal change. The school combines education with an emphasis on sports, especially golf – HAK Stegersbach is the only “Golf-HAK” in Austria - and soccer, and additional remedial courses, for example, for Business studies which are compulsive for all students during the whole school year. Furthermore there is a new school model called “BHAS PLUS” that enables students to achieve a so called “Berufsreifeprüfung”

which should open up their future perspectives: “Erwerb aller Berechtigungen für weiterführende Bildungswege (Akademien, Fachhochschulen, Kollegs, Universitäten)” (cf. www.golfhak.at). With regard to my diploma thesis HAK Stegersbach is important because it is another certified COOL school.

How it all began

The curriculum of Austrian business education schools has been enriched by a new subject called “Persönlichkeitsbildung”. Due to this introduction a team of seven teachers launched a COOL-project in the first class at the vocational school in Stegersbach in the school year 2006/2007. Another reason for several teachers to start dealing with cooperative, open forms of learning was the fact that they wanted to live up to standards of “modern education”. A teacher of this school reports:

Die Anforderungen an die Institution Schule haben sich verändert. Die Öffentlichkeit, im Besonderen die Wirtschaft, konfrontiert uns zunehmend mit dem Auftrag, selbstständigere, flexiblere, kommunikativere und kreativere Schülerinnen und Schüler heranzubilden. Die BHAK Stegersbach hat auf diese Herausforderung reagiert und startete mit dem Schuljahr 2006/07 das Projekt COOL. (Interview Gertraud Krammer)

The beginning of COOL at HAK Stegersbach was eased for several teachers because of the good cooperation with other business schools. Teachers report that the background information on the Dalton plan they had received and the experiences at other “COOL-schools” where COOL was practiced made them curious. Other COOL-teachers supported teachers of HAK Stegersbach when it came to organization but also personal advice was important whilst introducing COOL.

In seminars, teachers got basic information about progressive teaching that they were still missing. In these seminars there were also other COOL-teachers from all over the country and teachers with different experiences of working with COOL met each other. This was often considered as being the most important part of the seminars as novice COOL-teachers had the opportunity to get insight into several COOL-school systems not only in schools they were able to visit but also in other

schools. Teachers often talked about the organization and the structure of COOL and also about colleagues and their (interdisciplinary) application of COOL. Of course, participants of such seminars also talked about problems they encountered. In a report about COOL a teacher writes:

Bei diesem Treffen wurden dann auch konkrete Schritte in Planung und Ausführung des Entwicklungsprojektes gesetzt – dies war der anstrengendere Teil. Es war für uns nicht leicht, Ziele zu formulieren, die auch von der Leitung akzeptiert wurden. Ich fühlte mich teilweise überfordert, neben der Unterrichtsarbeit (mit Projekten in Abschlussklassen und der aufwendigen Neuerarbeitung von COOL-Arbeitsaufträgen) den Anspruch der Wissenschaft an das Entwicklungsprojekt optimal zu erfüllen. (Report HAK Stegersbach 2009)

In many of the following seminars teachers also talked a lot about problems they had when practicing COOL. Some of the schools had accomplished great work in the field of COOL in very little time which encouraged teachers of other schools to work on the development of COOL in their own school. A minor problem at the beginning was that HAK Stegersbach's emphasis on sports took priority over installing new teaching methods like COOL, as a permanent feature of the school. Other aspects, such as having less sports training in the winter months and more sports training in the summer months, needed to be considered when planning the time table of the year.

Certification

Keen on this new way of teaching, some teachers were immediately interested in working with quality criteria compiled by the COOL centre. For one year teachers worked with COOL assignments but the school was no official COOL school.

In 2007, there was the first regional meeting of Austrian COOL teachers in Stegersbach which led to the long-desired certification. The project continued the following year and has become a permanent component of the following classes.



Figure 1: Certification „COOL-networking partner“
Source: private

Not only the school itself is certified as a COOL school but students also get a certificate. At the end of their last school year they get a COOL certificate along with their leaving certificate.



Figure 2: Certificate
Source: Krammer

The COOL certificate confirms their additional qualifications gained when practicing COOL during their school career.

COOL at HAK Stegersbach

Visiting the vocational school in Stegersbach helped me to gain insights into daily COOL school life. At HAK Stegersbach teachers of different subjects such as Mathematics and IT but also teachers who teach foreign languages such as Croatian, Italian and English now work with COOL assignments. In the last years the team has increased from 7 teachers at the beginning of the school year 2006/7 to 13 teachers in the school year 2008/9. Since then the number of COOL teachers has been the same until the school year 2010/11. At this point it has to be mentioned that typical COOL assignments are not only used in designated COOL-classes but also in other classes as teachers have made good experiences with the use of assignments of various kinds. At the beginning, in 2006/07, assignments were restricted to one subject only, whereas from 2007/08 onwards teachers tried to design interdisciplinary assignments with teachers of other subjects. Teachers' exchange of experience is important, especially with regard to the successful practice of COOL and is therefore a routine in Stegersbach.

At HAK Stegersbach normal classrooms are at the students' disposal as well as additionally established COOL corners. These COOL rooms are intended to give students a place for various activities, such as discussing assignments, completing tasks or planning group work. Apart from chairs and tables there are cupboards where they can store away their COOL folders with previously-completed assignments. They are allowed to use computers for research. These additional provisions contribute to a comfortable learning environment. As a consequence it may reinforce teamwork, especially with regard to interdisciplinary projects.

In an interview Gertraud Krammer, who is an English teacher at this school and belongs to the team of initiators of COOL, told me that at the beginning of each COOL-class there are so called "Kennenlerntage" which should help the students to get to know each other and socialize. During these days the students are supposed to do several exercises, physical as well as mental activities where teamwork is quite

helpful. During the school year HAK Stegersbach regularly establishes the “Klassenrat” in COOL classes.

8.3 HAK Donaustadt

The business academy Donaustadt aims to impart business knowledge, help students to attain qualifications in foreign languages and to acquire knowledge about new information- and communication technologies. In addition, the business academy emphasizes new subjects like “personality formation”:

Darüber hinaus legen wir besonderen Wert auf Persönlichkeitsbildung: Im Team zu arbeiten, Projekte zu managen, sich selbst zu organisieren, seine Ideen und Ergebnisse zu präsentieren, ein verlässlicher Partner zu sein – all das wird die berufliche Karriere unserer Absolventen fördern. (www.bhakwien22.at)

Apart from the conveyance of essential knowledge and personality formation, the business academy Donaustadt – as well as Stegersbach and Steyr - also put emphasis on interdisciplinary learning which covers the same topics in different subjects and from different perspectives.

The training facilities of the business academy Donaustadt can also prepare students for manifold additional qualifications. In terms of these additional qualifications it might be interesting to mention that there are offers for students who are linguistically gifted but also for those who are very interested in economics as well as for those who are keen on computers. Furthermore, there is a wide range of optional subjects concerning arts and cultures, psychology and sports, to mention just a few.

How it all began

In the year 1999 the profile of the school was relaunched and in the course of this work it became clear that progressive teaching was an important aspect for most of the staff. Teachers were therefore inclined to introduce ways of teaching that departed from teacher-fronted ones. Subsequently an expert on the subject of Montessori pedagogy was invited to give a speech at this school. In further consequence, there were some more talks and workshops concerning the topic of “open learning” and the positive as well as negative aspects of this approach were discussed. Although teachers wanted to introduce and work with alternative ways of teaching there was a lack of effort to introduce them. Although there were already some open learning sequences, sustainability was the main problem. At that time some teachers already possessed some background information about COOL nevertheless another project called “ALU-project” was initiated first. “ALU” is an acronym for “alternative Lern- und Unterrichtsform” which means alternative forms of learning and teaching. The conditions for the implementation of COOL, however, were quite good:

- Support of the federal ministry
- Support of the head of the school
- Teacher’s declaration of intent to use alternative ways of teaching and learning

Apart from these positive aspects, there were still difficulties arising from various quarters. There was the fear that the introduction of COOL might have negative rather than positive results. Just to mention some of the fears, it was not clear whether teachers who work with new ways of learning could live up to the standards of the Austrian curriculum and if so, to what extent. Secondly, although there had already been talk of COOL since 2004, there was no “leading group” with the aim of broadening the use of alternative ways of teaching. As a summary, one can say that although many teachers were interested in COOL, the group willing to take its introduction in hand was initially missing. Some time had to pass before a class team

head agreed to fulfill this function. The core team consisted of about four teachers; one of them was Eva Annau. Their benchmarks consisted of the following points:

- One interdisciplinary assignment per month
- Evidence of students' satisfaction
- Team meetings on a regular basis
- Growth of the COOL-team

Some individual teachers took the initiative and successfully convinced other teachers of this new way of teaching. Some years later COOL was introduced.

COOL at HAK Donaustadt

In 2009, the Business Academy Donaustadt was certified as a so called COOL impulse school by the COOL impulse-centre in Steyr. About 15 teachers practice COOL at HAK Donaustadt. The exact number of COOL teachers at this school cannot be established since many teachers use COOL elements for some of their lessons but are not official COOL teachers of official COOL classes. In other words, teachers sometimes work with COOL-assignments but have no obligations to do that at a regular basis in particular classes.

HAK Donaustadt is up-to-date with respect to e-learning platforms. Due to this connectivity with e-learning, HAK Donaustadt obtained the so called “eCOOL-seal”:

Die Arbeit mit Arbeitsaufträgen, sogenannten Assignments, wird durch e-learning Elemente unterstützt, wie zum Beispiel Lernplattformen (MOODLE). (<http://www.bhakwien22.at/Ausbildung/COOL/tabid/93/Default.aspx>)

In this respect it is also worth mentioning that the business academy Donaustadt is the only school in Vienna that has obtained the “eCOOL-seal” and is a “flagship school” for cooperative open learning.

This is the reason why it is often visited by trainees or colleagues of other schools who are interested in new forms of learning and teaching. HAK Donaustadt offers the opportunity for them to audit new ways of working with pupils and for altered roles of teachers.

(<http://www.bhakwien22.at/Ausbildung/COOL/tabid/93/Default.aspx>)

8.4 Example assignments

In this chapter I would like to discuss some sample assignments designed by the case study schools. Most of the sample assignments are designed for English lessons only; just a few are designed for more than one subject. This chapter aims at illustrating for the reader what kind of learning aims COOL assignments have, how these assignments are integrated in the lesson and how varied these assignments are. Furthermore, these sample assignments should give the reader an idea of how COOL group work could be assessed. Apart from that the reader should get further information about the planning of interdisciplinary assignments. Finally, I would like to focus on similarities between COOL and the task-based language learning approach.

Assignment 1: “South Africa“

This assignment is designed for second grade, i.e. 10th grade, English students. The topic is South Africa and students are supposed to fulfill their given tasks in three lessons, at most.

In this assignment students are first of all supposed to choose one topic from six different ones, given on the assignment sheet. Then they have to prepare a presentation on one of these topics about South Africa. For preparing their presentations students are allowed to use the internet and other sources for research.

summary students are supposed to have twelve correct slides for their presentations and they should be able to speak freely when presenting. Another aim is that students should learn how to pronounce words correctly when presenting, which means that students have to look up unknown words before giving their presentation. As a last aim giving feedback to colleagues is mentioned.

Apart from the deadline, learning aims and the way students are supposed to work – alone or with a partner – there is also information about the way this particular assignment is assessed. In that case the teacher decided to use a system of points. The presentation is worth 18 points and is graded in three different ways: 4 points for presentation techniques, 4 points for content and information and 10 points for language skills. In contrast to traditional ways of grading/evaluating this COOL assignment is not just graded by the teacher but also by classmates. Language skills are graded by the teacher but presentation techniques, content and information are evaluated by students.

At the end of the assignment, there is a COOL contract for students and a further sheet for “peer feedback”. This assignment exemplifies how easily teachers can combine subjects. Although this assignment was not supposed to be interdisciplinary, it is not difficult to turn it into an interdisciplinary one and use it for two or more subjects together with the English lesson. This sample English assignment could be part of the Biology lesson if students chose the topic “Nature and animals” for their presentation. The topics “Host country and its team” or “host cities” could be used for the Geography lesson and students could work on an interdisciplinary basis. Furthermore, one could easily use that assignment for History (“History of Apartheid”, “Nelson Mandela”, “Current politics and social and economic situation”) and Arts lessons, for example.

Apart from the fact that this assignment encourages interdisciplinary work, it is also advantageous with regard to the enhancement of various language skills. In just one assignment three skills, namely reading, writing and speaking, can be covered. The

fact that there are six different topics about South Africa to choose from brings along the positive aspect that – in the best case – there are six different topics presented by students to their colleagues. This may make it more interesting because of the possible variation. In addition to that, learners get used to speaking in front of an audience and getting feedback from students of their class afterwards – not just from one teacher. Students are also responsible for checking the correct pronunciation of words they use in their presentation and these words are then usually remembered more easily in the future.

Assignment 2: “Energy and Environment“

The second sample assignment is designed for a third form, i.e. 11th grade, and can be used for English lessons as well as for Biology lessons. The learning aims of these tasks are to improve the “wordpower” on the topic of the assignment in order to be able to discuss environmental topics. With regard to the Biology lesson, students should learn to understand the problems of energy and energy consumption and they are animated to consider their personal energy consumption.

In order to illustrate that assignments do not necessarily have to close with a student presentation, I chose this assignment as a second example. Here students are supposed to write down unfamiliar words, express their personal opinion and complete several other tasks. Students are also asked to write a personal feedback on this topic and on their working process. A report about time management has to be included to students’ portfolios as well, which forces students to plan their work thoroughly.

Teachers control task fulfillment in a revision of words and by talking with the students about this topic in class in one of the following lessons.











COOL - Assignment for BIOLOGY+ENGLISH Class: 3AS 2010/11 - Nr. 5 in English handed out: Jan. 20, 11 -for English and Biology lessons until deadline Deadline – Feb. 10, 2011 Title: Energy&Environment			
Aims <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to boost your wordpower on the topic in order to be able to discuss environmental topics to understand the problems of energy generation and environment to think about your personal energy consumption to have a good contribution that presents also your opinion for your portfolio Control – <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Revision of words - February 10th!!!!  Conversation class concerning the contents – Febr.10 and 11 Materials are available in all English and biology lessons TASKS and further instructions <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Tasks are to be found on the “Stationenplan Energy”  you may work in groups as you like  when you do games/quiz sheets do them in pairs and ask your teacher for solutions  While working keep a personal wordlist for your test on Febr.4 and for your portfolio!!!  Doing the compulsory tasks (Pflichtstationen P) is maximum “befriedigend”  The contents of this assignment will be part of your next test (2nd semester) and your final exam in June !!!  Include a personal feedback on how you feel about the topic and describe your process of working in about 100 words and add your time management (on an extra sheet) – this is an important document for your portfolio 			
Station Nr.	Thema/Aufgabe	Pflicht/Wahl	
1	Global Warming Take the 2 worksheets and solve them with the help of the 5 green information sheets .(there are 2 sets of the green sheets)	P	
2	Sources of Energy Find answers to the questions below. For information see Wikipaedia in English! Which ways of generating energy do you know? Which are the renewable energy resources? Which are used in Austria?	P	
3	Wordpower Energy Choose as many of the game sheets There are 6 different games sheets (in 5 copies each) you like to boost your vocabulary for the topic ENERGY	W	
4	Green Resolutions for a Happy New Year Browse through the material given to get good ideas. With a partner design a nice leaflet with your suggestions	W	
5	Ecological footprint Explain what the ecological footprint is and interpret your personal result. Ask your teacher for info-material in English. What can you personally do to save energy? Write a text of about 100 words	P	
6	Fossile Energieträger Fülle das vorliegende Arbeitsblatt mit einem non-permanenten Stift sorgfältig aus. Beachte die Kohleproben.	P	
7	Begriffsklärung Ordne den entsprechenden Begriffen die jeweils richtigen Erklärungen zu	P	
8	Leitfaden zum Spritsparen Lies dir die 12 Tipps aufmerksam durch und suche dir 3 davon aus die du relativ rasch verwirklichen möchtest	W	
9	Elektrische Energie Beantworte die vorliegenden Fragen unter Zuhilfenahme der entsprechenden Unterlagen (BOW-Buch&Schemas)	P	
10	Atomenergie 1. Wodurch/Woraus entsteht die Energie die in Atomkraftwerken gewonnen wird? 2. Nenne mindestens 5 Gründe warum die Kernkraft keine zukunftsfähige Energie sein kann.	P	
11	Erneuerbare Energie Beantworte die folgenden Fragen und setze dich mit den bereitgestellten Objekten auseinander	P	
12	Energielotto Suche dir eine/n Partner/Partnerin und stellt euch Fragen aus dem bereitgestellten Energielotto	W	

Figure 4: COOL assignment HAK Steyr

Source: Wittwer

As stated on the assignment sheet there are some compulsory tasks and some voluntary ones marked with a “w”. This shows that COOL assignments provide an opportunity for differentiated learning. Moreover this assignment is especially well designed because there are different kinds of games, written and oral tasks as well as sheets for exercising which promise several varied lessons for the students.

Assignments 3-4: Reading, presenting and grammar



The following assignment is designed for a 5th grade, i.e. 13th grade. This assignment illustrates how reading can be integrated into English COOL lessons. The learning aims of this and similar assignments where students have to read authentic newspaper articles are diverse. One task students are very often asked to do is to dot down the gist of articles they read. Furthermore they are often supposed to find arguments mentioned in the texts, in this case pro Obama keeping his promises and against. In general students should learn how to read for the gist of articles, they should practice summarizing texts as well as doing vocabulary work and highlighting different opinions contained within the text. Moreover students should get used to reading and working with authentic materials/texts. Although one is tempted to think that the focus is on reading only, writing also plays a major role in these assignments, for example, when students are asked to write down their own point of view concerning various topics of the text. In addition to that, speaking skills are also paid attention to because students sometimes have to present their outcomes orally or have to ask other colleagues what they think about the text.


5AK – 2009/2010

ASSIGNMENT

No.

Handed out:	Handed in:	Assessment:	Material: Spotlight
-------------	------------	-------------	------------------------

	Aims: <i>I can find and present arguments</i>	
---	---	---

How to do it	Tasks
<p>♣ = on my own</p> <p>♣ = on my own</p> <p>♣ ♣ = partner</p> <p>♣ = on my own</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the article: "Waiting for change"(Spotlight 1/10 pp.28/29) • Dot down the gist of this article • Find two arguments pro Obama keeping his promises and two against and write them down • Write down your own point of view • Ask two people what they think (write down who you asked and their opinion) • Present your finished task in front of the class <p>How did you like it? </p>
	Any further comment:

Mag. Gertraud Krammer

Figure 5: COOL assignment HAK Stegersbach
Source: Krammer

The assignment given the headline “Present tense simple/progressive” is interesting because it demonstrates that teachers can use COOL assignments and practice open forms of learning for teaching grammar. This English assignment is designed for students of the first grade, i.e. 9th grade. It aims at improving the students’ knowledge about the present tense and its correct usage. All tasks deal with daily routines: there are gap filling activities, matching activities, reading activities as well as writing tasks. “Results” are compared with a partner.





	1AK 2010/2011 Arbeitsauftrag No.1 Present tense simple/progressive		
Handed out:	Handed in:	Checked: partner	Material: text
	Aims: <i>I can do a matching task</i> <i>I can use the present tense correctly</i>		
	Tasks		
‡ = on my own ‡ ‡ = partner	Daily routines 1. Match the pictures on the handout with the correct activity described below. 2. Read the text and write the activities from above in the gaps. 3. Underline all the other activities in the text which Janet and her children do. 4. Read a real-life example of a daily routine in the extract of the text : A DAY IN MY LIFE: <i>When your kids are your job</i> 5. Then write it again using “she” instead of “I” 6. Compare your gap filling with your partner. 7. Hand your text in the 3 rd person: A DAY IN MY LIFE to your partner for correcting.		
..... Datum	 Name	
Mag. Gertraud Krammer / Mag. Katrin Hoffmann / Mag. Heinz Müller			

Figure 6: COOL assignment HAK Stegersbach

Source: Krammer

Interdisciplinary assignments - HAK Donaustadt and HAK Steyr

In a conversation with one of the teachers of the business academy Donaustadt, I learned more about the use of interdisciplinary assignments at this school. In general teachers at this school see interdisciplinary assignments as enrichment and the feedback of students is positive as well. They report that they can memorize content better and generally speaking they view interdisciplinary assignments as enhancing.

As mentioned earlier, at this school interdisciplinary assignments were of great importance from the beginning. The business academy Donaustadt organizes the assignments according to the “Liebelschen Torte” (see enclosed diagram) which was named after Erika Liebel who is a teacher at HAK Donaustadt. At HAK Donaustadt teachers decided to have at least eight interdisciplinary assignments within one school year and all teachers may voluntarily take part in the organization and planning of the assignments.

With regard to the “Liebelsche Torte” it is important to mention that several meetings of teachers who are willing to cooperate are organized. In these meetings teachers decide on topics for the next school year. In 2010/11, for example, there were meetings for the subjects German, English, business administration and BWUP (Betriebswirtschaftliche Übungen), BPQM (Businessstraining, Projekt- und Qualitätsmanagement), IFOM (Informations- und Officemanagment) and Geography. In these team meetings in the year 2010/11 subject teachers decided on eight topics that they had in common as well as decided on new topics. In a next step these topics are usually presented to the team of class teachers – class teachers do not necessarily have to be part of the actual team - and they are requested to record the various topics themselves in case they also want to work with their students on the specific topics. Following this, appointments are arranged.

Two example plans for the school year of a second grade class and one first grade class are illustrated by the following diagrams:

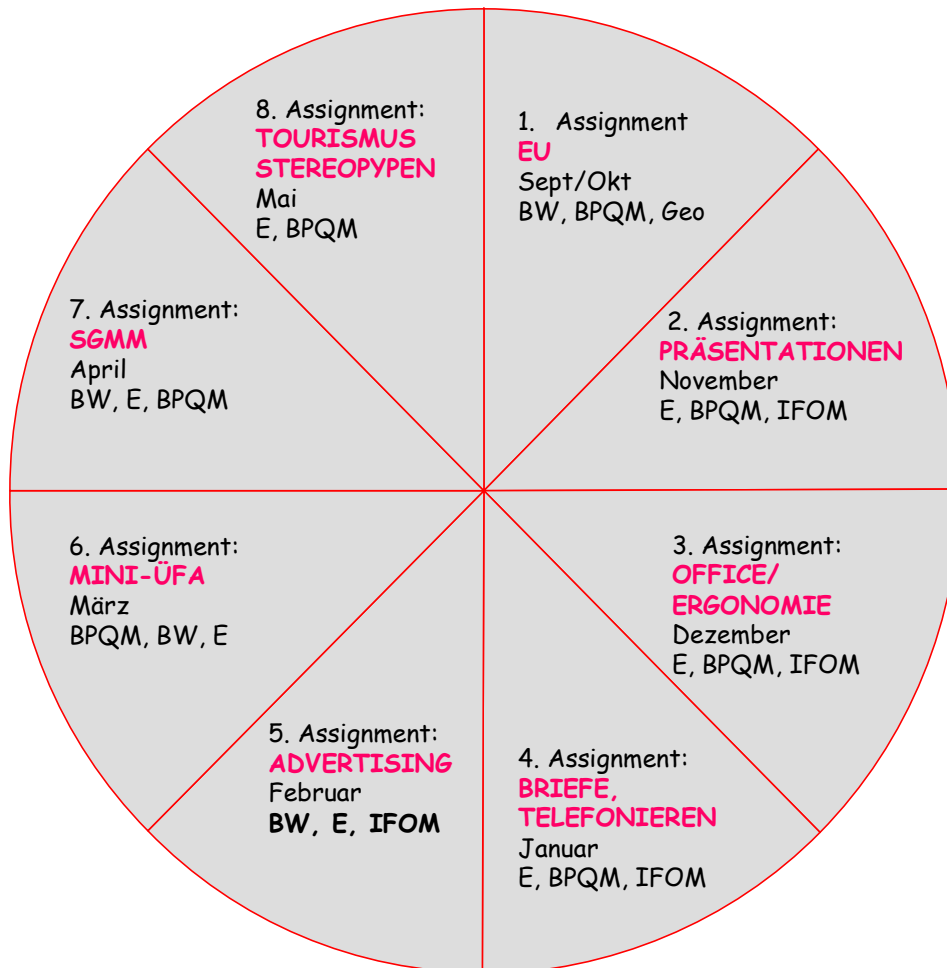
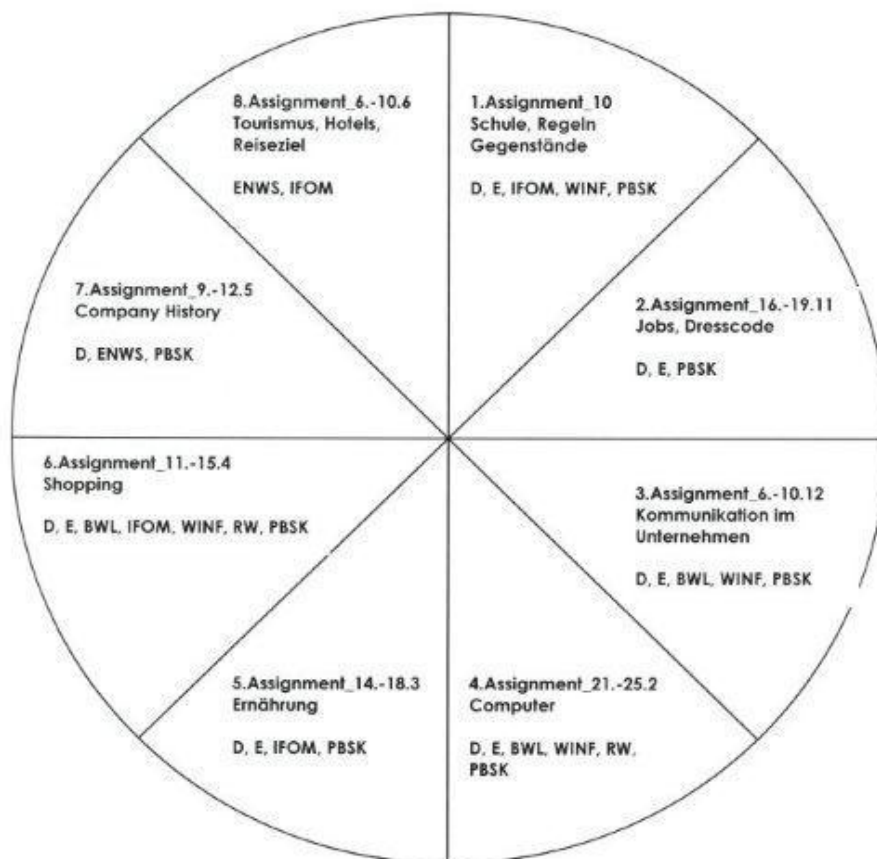


Figure 7: “Liebelsche Torte“ 2D
Source: Annau



JAHRESPLANUNG

Fächerübergreifende Assignments 1DK Klasse SJ 2010/11



©Annau, Aubauer, Hrzina, Knor, Kucera, Liebel, Seifried

Figure 8: “Liebelsche Torte“ 1D

Source: Annau

These two illustrations clearly show the practicability of foreign languages for interdisciplinary assignments. With regard to the first form there are six out of eight assignments planned for the English lesson. The annual program for the second

form even provides for seven out of eight interdisciplinary assignments to be coordinated with English language teaching.

Since the “Liebelsche Torte” is similar to the system at HAK Steyr I would like to present and discuss a special assignment for a first grade designed by teachers at HAK Steyr. This assignment was used for a “live and learn” (L&L) class where even five subjects were integrated. It is of importance to mention that three out of five subjects were foreign language lessons.

Teachers of the subjects English, German, French, Spanish, Geography, Business Studies and Physics decided to do an interdisciplinary assignment on a L&L day. The aims of such a L&L day in general are that students first of all work on an interdisciplinary assignment and secondly that they learn how to manage their time since they are not interrupted by the changing subjects/teachers after 50 minutes. At the last L&L day at HAK Steyr students were supposed to find appropriate information and material about the topic “child labour” on their own. The assignment had to be fulfilled in four lessons and consisted of six different tasks. Some of the tasks were in English, others were in German and according to that students had to prepare their presentations, which meant that some parts of the assignments had to be worked on in English whereas others in German. Students were supposed to work in groups of 4-5 students and each group first of all had to choose one of the five countries. When they all agreed on one country they started doing the first task. The task for the English part of the interdisciplinary assignment was a role play. Students had to find pictures of a child working in that country and then work on an interesting résumé about his/her working day in form of a simulated interview or a fictitious story about the daily routine. Students were supposed to fulfill this task within 40 minutes.

With regard to the German task students had to write a letter to the organization called UNICEF and ask for support for their country. For this task students had 30-40 minutes. In the Geography “lesson” basic definitions and background information was asked. Within 40-50 minutes students had to find out what types of “child labour” there are in “their” country and try to find respective advantages and disadvantages. After that they were supposed to make a poster with that information on it. In Business Administration students had several smaller tasks to work on. First of all they had to find out in which industries most child labour can be found. Then they had to elaborate on what kind of consequences child labour might have in general, just to give an example. In order to illustrate these tasks they had to make a diagram. All these tasks for BA had to be done in 30-40 minutes.

In Physics students had the topic of “work/labour” in a physical sense. They had to find out symbols and entities which describe or define “labour”. Here again students had 30-40 minutes to work on this task.

For the Spanish/French task students had to prepare a fact file. In addition to that they had to prepare a German list of information for those students of the other foreign language group.

The last “lesson” of the “L&L” day was the “presentation lesson” where students presented their outcomes to teachers and other colleagues. At the end of the L&L day they had to reflect on their working process. Individual tasks of several subjects are illustrated in the following.

ARBEITSAUFTAG



SchülerInnen:		Ausgabedatum:	12.1.2012
Klasse:	1AK	Abgabetermin:	12.1.2012
Fächer:	E/D/GEO/PH/BW/F/SP	laufende Nr.:	01
LehrerInnen:	Scherhammer/Cermak/Peham/Schöngruber/ Holzer/Mayr/Neuhauser/Steininger/Egger/Moritz/Frisch	Thema:	Child Labour



Lernziele:

Ich kann...

- ... im Team arbeiten.
- ... die Zeit für meine Arbeit richtig einteilen.
- ... selbständig Informationen beschaffen und aufbereiten.
- ... ein Thema präsentieren sowie sachliche Inhalte kreativ umsetzen.

Genaue Arbeitsanweisungen:

- Arbeitet in Gruppen (3-4 Personen)!
- Die Arbeitsaufgaben sind teilweise in Englisch bzw. Deutsch zu bearbeiten.
- Die Gesamtarbeitszeit beträgt 4 Einheiten + Präsentation 1 Einheit.
- Die Präsentation erfolgt als Stationenbetrieb. Erstellt dazu mindestens ein Plakat und ein Handout (1 Seite).
- Wählt ein Land und bearbeitet dazu nachfolgende Arbeitsaufgaben: Peru, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Mali, Congo, Bolivien, Ecuador, Haiti.
- Nicht vergessen – Reflexion am Ende des Arbeitsauftrags!!!

Aufgaben:

SP/F Fact file - información básica sobre el país de tu grupo (dónde está, mapa, informaciones generales sobre lenguas, población, religión, ...)

Fact file - information fondamentale sur le pays de ton groupe (où il se trouve, carte, informations generales sur la langue, la population, la religion, ...)

www.wikipedia.de, www.derreisefuehrer.com → auf diesen Seiten findet ihr die Informationen auf Deutsch und in eurer Fremdsprache (durch Klick auf die jeweilige Sprache oder das Wappen)

Achtung: Ihr sollt wissen, was die Informationen auf Deutsch bedeuten, um sie auch den Schülern der anderen Fremdsprache erklären zu können!

20 Min

ARBEITSAUFTRAG



BW	Nehmt eine Einteilung der Wirtschaft des von euch gewählten Landes nach Wirtschaftssektoren (primär, sekundär, tertiär, quartär) vor. Zeichnet ein Kreisdiagramm und tragt die Prozentanteile ein. In welchen Sektoren sind häufig Kinder beschäftigt? Was sind die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen von Kinderarbeit im Allgemeinen? (mind. 4 Aspekte)	30-40 Min
D	Hilfe für Kinder: Schreibt einen appellativen Leserbrief an UNICEF, in dem ihr um Unterstützung für „euer“ Land bittet.	30-40 Min
GEO	“child labour”: What is it? Why? What different forms? Find out what types there are in “your” country and try to find advantages/disadvantages of the fact. good sources: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/siteaz/a.htm , http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/kidsweb/world/index.htm	30-40 Min
PH	“Arbeit” ist ein sehr vielfältig verwendeter Begriff! Aber was bedeutet Arbeit im physikalischen Sinn? Mit welchen Einheiten, Symbolen und Formeln wird sie beschrieben? Welche Formen der mechanischen Arbeit gibt es? In welchem Zusammenhang stehen Arbeit und Energie? Wie unterscheiden sich Arbeit und Leistung? a) Klärt diese Fragen mit Hilfe der zur Verfügung gestellten Bücher oder mit dem Internet www.leifiphysik.de/web_ph8_g8/grundwissen/01arbeit/formeln/formeln; www.lernstunde.de/thema/arbeitenergie/grundwissen.htm; www.frustfrei-lernen.de/mechanik/mechanik-arbeit; b) Fertigt eine einfache Versuchsanordnung/Vorrichtung an, mit der das Thema gut illustriert und allen anderen gut erklärt werden kann.	30-40 Min
E	‘Role Play’: Find a picture of a child in your chosen country, give him/her a name and tell us about his/her working day in form of - a simulated interview or - a fictitious story about the daily routine!	40 Min
Feedback		Ich habe den Arbeitsauftrag gelesen, verstanden und den Abgabetermin zur Kenntnis genommen:

Figure 9: L&L assignment HAK Steyr

Source: Egger

The last part of this chapter refers to an approach which was discussed earlier on, namely the task-based approach. With regard to English assignments the similarities between COOL and TBA are obvious. One aim of the task-based approach is to use the target language meaningfully and as often as possible. After analyzing these COOL assignments it is obvious that also COOL focuses on using the target language during the lesson, since COOL assignments usually consist of several tasks

that have to be fulfilled. Regarding these tasks one principle of TBA also holds true for COOL, namely that tasks are activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome. No matter if students use the foreign language for communicating in group work or when presenting their outcomes/findings, students are taught to communicate through the target language. Apart from that COOL and TBA have the advantage that students have to look up unfamiliar words and check them for their correct pronunciation which means that language is used meaningfully. COOL as well as TBA aim at creating an authentic context in which students are supposed to use their individual second language knowledge in real-time communication.

COOL and TBA students are often encouraged to work together in groups, which mean that interaction between students is enhanced. Quite generally one can say that in both ways of teaching, usually tasks are employed that appeal to students' genuine interest or that are relevant to them. As a consequence supporters of COOL and TBA claim that their "method" is very motivating.

Apart from the aspect of communication there is another similarity. The use of authentic texts in the classroom is important for concepts like learner autonomy and the task-based language learning approach. Supporters of concepts like learner autonomy think that authentic texts supply the essential input that increases learner awareness of language usage. Authentic materials may decrease reliance on pedagogic language rules and in that sense authentic texts may also provide an alternative to outdated textbooks and provide learners with the various genuine texts they need. This also holds true for COOL since students are encouraged to work with authentic materials while doing research. This means that they are also allowed to integrate these authentic texts into the learning situation and use them for their presentation. When working with authentic texts teachers sometimes had the feeling that students develop language knowledge more naturally. This fact is also supported by the theory of TBA.

As a summary, one can say that COOL assignments – as well as TBA tasks - offer the possibility to cover all skills in an interesting, interdisciplinary and varied manner without using traditional teaching methods. Furthermore, in both ways of teaching teachers usually try to balance the exposure to reading, i.e. self-research when practicing COOL, and listening, i.e. listening to speakers' presentations, with regard to the use of the target language.

8.5 Challenges and visions for the future

As a last point I would like to mention some challenges and visions for the future regarding the implementation of COOL at Austrian schools. The introduction of COOL and of course every other new teaching method requires extra unpaid work and a lot of involvement on behalf of the teachers. As a consequence, this may overwhelm teachers who lose their motivation to work on this new method. Apart from the problems reported by teachers who already worked with COOL, there was the problem of encouraging new teachers to practice COOL. It also took quite some time to encourage not only the teachers but also the pupils. Some pupils were open to innovation, others were not.

Concerning visions for the future it was mentioned that besides some minor organizational details such as having access to computers during COOL-lessons, the vocational schools wish to expand the number of teachers who practice COOL. Teachers at HAK Stegersbach would like to introduce a “COOL-day” once a week.

With regard to visions for the future at HAK Donaustadt, first of all the addition to the school building that started in the year 2011 is important. It is not just a simple extension of the school, but a new concept designed with teachers and special architects who kept in mind that the concept of the school building should conform to the requirements of open and cooperative forms of learning.

Annau further explained to me that they call the concept “Wabensystem”, “honey-comb system” in English, which means that three classes will have one computer room at their disposal as well as two other rooms: one communal room plus a small room for storing their materials. This “comb” will then be taught by a teacher or, preferably a team of teachers. Regarding future visions, Annau also mentioned in our conversation that the COOL community – not just at HAK Donaustadt but in general – devotes a lot of thought to the topic of architecture for open forms of teaching and learning.

What HAK Donaustadt also says about their vision for the future is that:

Selbständiges Arbeiten, freie Zeiteinteilung und Teamarbeit unter Lehrer/innen und Schüler/innen sollten fester – und selbstverständlicher – Teil der Schul- und Unterrichtskultur werden. (Entwicklungsprojekt Business Academy Donaustadt)

In general one can say that teachers are quite happy about the results of several years of practicing COOL. They are convinced that the future of COOL at the three case study schools is assured.

9 Questionnaire study

As briefly mentioned earlier on, the reasons why I decided to hand out a questionnaire to teachers and pupils are that, on the one hand, I wanted to see how COOL is implemented and, on the other hand, to learn more about the personal opinion of teachers as well as students.

There are two kinds of questionnaires: one designed for teachers and one for students. In chapter 9.1 the results of the student questionnaire are discussed. In the following chapter, 9.2, results of the teachers' questionnaire are presented and analyzed. Students were asked to answer fourteen questions about COOL of which five were open questions where students were supposed to state their opinion. Nine other questions were multiple choice questions. Three times students had the chance to justify their answer with a following statement. The questionnaire was divided into four categories: COOL in general (8 questions), assignments (2 questions), class community (3 questions) and "Klassenrat" (1 question).

Finally, the questionnaire was distributed in three different schools: HAK Steyr, HAK Donaustadt and HAK Stegersbach. Teachers distributed the questionnaire in six different classes, one 12th form, three 11th forms, a 10th form and a 9th form. All in all 112 students and 9 teachers filled in the questionnaire. In the following I would like to present the overall results of all three schools, comment on them and then go into more detail where there are interesting aspects concerning the individual classes and their results. I would also like to give an overview of teacher's opinions and as a last point analyze the results concerning the question which has to do with the English lesson. ("Does COOL help you with learning English?")

9.1 Overall results of student questionnaire

COOL in general

Do you like COOL?

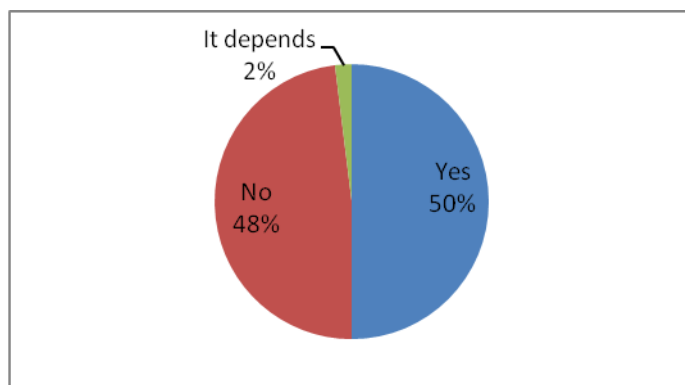


Figure 10: Diagram 1

When analyzing the overall results of all schools, it becomes clear that the results of this question are a close run. As apparent from the questionnaire, half of the students like COOL. Due to the fact that this result is rather unsatisfying because of the close run concerning the general results, I would like to have a closer look at the individual class results. In order to do so, some interesting partial results from different schools are presented.

To begin with, I would like to present different class results.

	Do students like COOL?	
	Yes	No
Class A: 9th form This is an “official” COOL class in their first year. Their home teacher is a COOL teacher.	<u>19</u>	4
Class B: 11th form This class was a COOL class from the beginning. Their home teacher is committed to COOL.	<u>16</u>	1

Class C: 11th form This class does not have a COOL home teacher, so no “Klassenrat”. Some subject teachers try to introduce COOL and work with assignments regularly. Their home teacher does not really like to work with COOL and it is not an “official” COOL class.	1	<u>18</u>
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Figure 11: Class results

This partial analysis clearly shows that many factors may influence student’s opinions and their teachers seem to play a decisive role. Other aspects like the attitude of students towards COOL from the beginning onwards, the climate of the class in general and the performance level of students seem to be more determining as one would assume. To give an example, this questionnaire was distributed at the end of a school year. A teacher of a class where the result was quite negative told me in a reflective conversation that those students who got bad marks made COOL responsible for it:

Bei dieser Klasse handelt es sich nämlich um eine Ausnahmeklasse in der von Anfang an eine starke Gruppe gegen COOL eingestellt war. Jetzt am Schulschluss – viele hatten sehr schlechte Ergebnisse – hat sich dieser Effekt noch verstärkt.

What do you like about COOL?

In order to make the answers to the first question more transparent, this question deals with what students like about COOL. I decided to write an open question to make sure that students were encouraged to give feedback. Students who answered with yes to the question also mentioned positive aspects and explained what they like about COOL. However, not only those students who like COOL expressed some advantageous aspects about this concept but also students who answered that

they do not like COOL found some positive aspects about it. Students who are completely convinced by COOL simply stated “everything”.

Notably many students responded that they first of all like working in teams. The reasons why they like group work will be analyzed later on. Many of them gave further explanations and stated that they like having the choice of working in groups or rather alone.

Another aspect which was mentioned very often was that they like working independently and learning things on their own. They also wrote that they like helping other pupils if they need support and that they appreciate working without teachers, at least for some time. Others called it “open learning” and said that they like this form of learning in keeping with the motto “learning by doing”. With this respect they also stated that they prefer working actively.

The activity type also has an impact on the learning process of the students. A few of them mentioned that they think that everything is easier to learn when practicing COOL. They said that COOL facilitates their learning process because they prefer active learning.

Apart from the activity type which was mentioned most of the time, there were also other advantages expressed. Some students talked about the COOL-topics they like however, this of course is not necessarily an advantage of COOL.

“Working outside the classroom” was another positive aspect. The fact that students do not have to sit in class but have rooms to choose from is considered as advantageous by students. Furthermore, they like that they are allowed to use the computer whenever they need it for research.

A small number of students also responded that they like COOL because they do not have anything to do and so they can relax. Some of them even wrote that they like being able to make phone calls during phases of open learning. This would be a point worth consideration for teachers but is not necessarily of great importance for my analysis because only five out of 112 students gave such answers.

Some of the students, who ticked “no” at the question if they like COOL, also came up with positive aspects about COOL. Most of them, however, could not see any positive points about this learning method. Students said that COOL assignments, and in general, open learning phases are simply “too much” and they do not know what they are supposed to do during COOL lessons. This was stated at least five times. Many answers were similar to “it is too much and you don’t have a good overview”. Others wrote “I don’t like it because we just get the assignments and nobody actually tells us what to do”. Complaints easily ring out when you read statements like:

Some teachers don’t explain at all. They just give use the assignments and tell us that the deadline is the following week.

Students also responded that they do not like anything about COOL. Others expressed their opinion about COOL more restrained when they stated “not really much, I just like the assignments in geography”, for example. A smaller number of students claimed that they do not like much about COOL, only the fact that when they learn for a test, COOL assignments give a better overview than usual ones. A significant number of students who answered the first question “Do you like COOL” with no stated that the only thing they like about COOL is teamwork.

Five students responded that they sometimes consider COOL as good and sometimes they think that this concept is “unnecessary” but they like that they can work when and where they want as well as the fact that the teacher is not always around.

Does a cooperative, open way of learning help you to memorize the content better compared to the traditional way of teaching and learning?

With regard to question number three “Does a cooperative, open way of learning help you to memorize the content better compared to the traditional way of teaching and learning?” fifty percent of all students answered yes to this question. This can be traced back to the fact that some of the students stated, as already mentioned in the answers of question number two, that things they learn or work on by themselves are kept in their minds more easily. However, a question that arises is why only half of the students think that COOL can help to memorize the content better compared to the traditional way of teaching and learning? The fact that there are also students who prefer lecture-style teaching methods due to various reasons might be an explanation. There are also learners who prefer the content to be presented where he/she can take notes and feels more secure when everything is presented by the teacher.

Does COOL help you to work independently?

With regard to the next question one can say that most of the students realize that COOL helps them to work independently. 76 % of them indicated that COOL helps them to learn how to work on their own. Only a small percentage of 24 % answer with no to this question. As stated in the first question, students enjoy working alone and make decisions about how and when to work. COOL initiators claim that all these aspects increase their independence.

Do you learn to cooperate with other colleagues?

What is said by COOL initiators is that students who practice COOL learn to cooperate with other colleagues. Furthermore, the ability to cooperate with other people is considered to be one of the most important aspects in the present-day workplace. More and more companies demand this ability from their applicants. The result

concerning this question was again positive since more than 60 % of all students stated that they learn to cooperate with other colleagues when practicing COOL.

The reasons why 39 % of the students do not think so are listed in the following. Some of them mentioned that they had already known how to cooperate with other students when they started practicing COOL. They think that going to school and working together with other pupils is enough for learning how to cooperate with them. Therefore they said that they do not need “methods” like COOL for learning this.

Another reason for negative feedback was that students even think that the concept of COOL promotes the opposite. Those students made the experience of working together with people who were unreliable and therefore did not finish their part of the work properly. Consequently the students, who negated this question, stated that working alone is more satisfying and above all successful.

Do you learn to manage your time?

Being able to manage one’s own time is another important feature of COOL. Almost three-quarters of all students indicated that they learn to manage their time when practicing COOL. This result can be traced back to the deadlines COOL brings along. All assignments have to be finished by a certain deadline and students have to keep that in mind. Managing their time and dealing with deadlines is essential for students not only for their future job but also for further education. Students know that at university, for instance, it is quite common for students to hand in their assignments according to a particular deadline. The same holds true for jobs they have to do at work.

Does COOL help you with learning English?

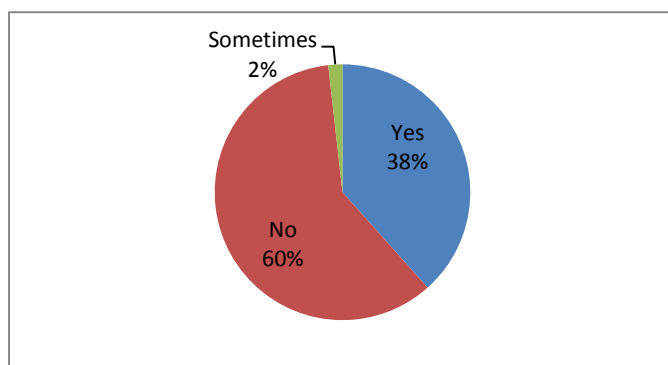


Figure 12: Diagram 2

This is of course one of the most important questions with regard to the topic of my diploma thesis. All the more surprising it is because this question is one of the two questions which have more negative than positive responses. A bare majority of students, states that COOL does not help them with learning English. Only 2 % say that COOL sometimes helps them with learning English and 38 % answered with yes.

A great number of students answered various questions with giving additional information, for example, that many aspects are dependent on the subject, the teacher and the content. Due to this reason, I expected these answers with regard to this question as well, however, there were no such answers. After having analyzed every single class result, I came to the conclusion that one class could probably made partly responsible for this negative result. There is only one of six sample classes where the entire class answered with no to this question. All the other classes had outcomes with some positive and some negative answers. Although, at one school students of two classes answered indeed quite positive to this question, the overall result of this school was nevertheless negative regarding this particular question.

Since no students gave further explanations for their choice of answer, it will be quite interesting to see what the teachers answered.

**Do you think that COOL has a positive impact on your future job career?
Why/not?**

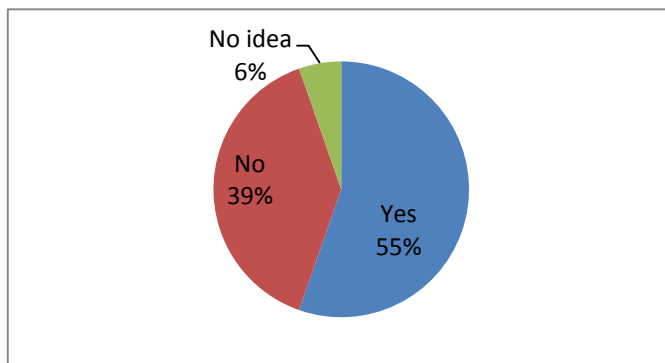


Figure 13: Diagram 3

Here again the results were surprising. Barely more than the half of all students thinks that COOL has a positive impact on their future job career. 6 % of the students do not know if it will have an impact. Reasons why 39 % of all pupils tick “no” will be analyzed later on. This would mean that students refute the hypothesis of COOL initiators since they claim that COOL was introduced due to the demand to introduce teaching and learning methods which enhance the soft skills of students by the working world. In other words, this would mean that students are not convinced that the main aim of COOL is reached. However, it is interesting to mention that students also gave abounding feedback. The answers they gave show that there are many students who kind of contradict themselves and so revealed something about their misconceptions about COOL. To demonstrate this I would like to quote some of the answers they gave. At the beginning I would also like to summarize the positive answers:

Out of 112 students, 62 answered with yes to this question with the following justifications:

- I learn how to work in groups
- You already have to get along with members of your group
- In some jobs you have to work in groups
- ... because you learn how to cooperate with other colleagues

Apart from group work, there was also another important aspect mentioned. Some of the students said that they learn how to work and lead a group and this of course is an advantage with regard to their future job career. Besides the group work they also mentioned the opposite which is working alone and independently. Here are some of the answers:

- We become independent in doing things
- Autonomy
- I can do things better on my own than other people

In this connection, pupils also mention the process of becoming self-confident and some of them even stated that they get more secure when fulfilling tasks.

The aspect of dealing with time was another point which was stated several times:

- Because I learn how to manage my time ...
- You get a better feeling to manage your time
- Außerdem muss man mit viel Arbeit in kurzer Zeit klarkommen

One of the students nicely summarized all the mentioned aspects in one sentence, when he said, “Because you need every aspect of COOL in every job”.

Although it seems that most of the students understood the concept of COOL and the idea which stands behind it, there are also responses where one is forced to doubt this. I would like to group the students who answered with no into three groups:

- Students who do not like COOL at all and see no reason for practicing it at school
- Students who are not sure about the impact of COOL on their future job but answered with no to the question or least denied it partially
- Students who have not figured out why COOL is practiced

Considering the first group, there are many students who think that COOL is simply not important. Many students said that they are not sure about the impact of COOL on their future career and stated the following:

- It may have a positive impact but I am not so sure about it
- I think it is good for school but for a job it is not so important
- I think it is only good for learning how to work alone and how to manage time
- It does not help me for the future
- Not the way we use it because we do not always compare the assignments
- One of the group does everything, the others do nothing – what kind of impact should this concept have?

Based on the results one can say that a small number of students are uncertain about the impact COOL may have on their future and some dissatisfaction is clearly noticeable. However, the aspects mentioned concerning dissatisfaction could easily be eliminated, for example, when diversifying the composition of groups and controlling them at least a little bit.

When it comes to the third group of students, it is perceivable that most of them have not seen through the concept of COOL. Here are the most interesting answers, some of them have been translated:

- Because I think that our bosses in the future are not interested if we had COOL in school or not
- Nobody asks you if you have had COOL at school
- I don't think that in the future people will ask me if I had COOL when I will look for a job
- Nobody uses such forms of working
- These assignments are unnecessary
- I was able to work on my own before COOL
- I already learned to work independently. In my eyes COOL is just a waste of time. No offence, though.
- I don't understand what should be better when practicing COOL, I think this concept is stupid
- I don't really know what should help me about this because you cannot compare school with job even if you do COOL or not

Here, I would like to add that those answers have of course some validity. I agree with them partially when they say that no future boss will ask them if they had COOL at school or not. This might be right due to the fact that different schools

have different forms of open learning and teaching. It does not really matter if it is called COOL or something else but what counts is the fact that they had some form of autonomous, progressive teaching and learning. Therefore, I disagree with them when they say that COOL has no positive impact for their future job career. Some students might benefit more from it, some less but I think that all students at least learn something from it.

Assignments

Are the assignments easy to understand? Why/not?

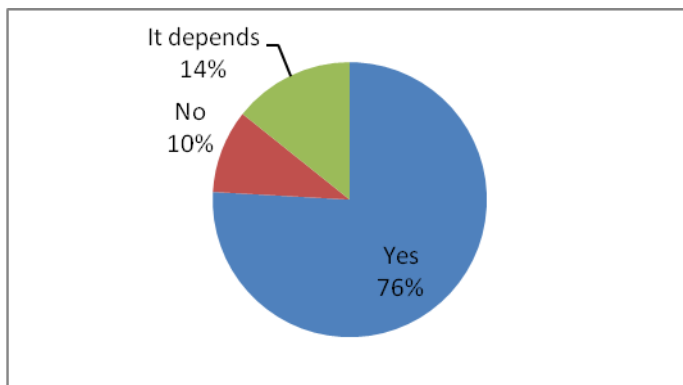


Figure 14: Diagram 4

The diagram shows that 76 % of all students think that the assignments are easy to understand. 10 % of the students say that they have difficulties with understanding the assignments and do not agree. The rest of the students (14 %) share the opinion that it depends very much on the subject and the particular teacher. The topic acts a part as well. Worth mentioning in this respect is the school in Stegersbach where all of the students indicated that they understand the assignments.

In the following, there are some of the reasons why they state that they understand all the assignment.

- Yes, because teachers explain everything
- Because we discuss them

If there are still some things unclear, students have a look at the handout and find the needed information most of the time:

- Yes, because everything you have to do is on the sheet
- Yes, because there is all the information that we need written
- Because the main things are pointed out
- Yes, the introductions are always clear

Some students also stated that the assignments are per se not difficult to understand:

- Tasks are easy to understand
- Because they aren't hard to understand
- Not really difficult English

Several students went for the answer "sometimes":

- Sometimes I don't understand everything
- Every teacher's assignment is different (some yes, some no)
- Sometimes they aren't easy but the teachers help us
- Yes, but not all
- Yes, but complicate

There are 10 % of students who have the opinion that the assignments are not easy to grasp:

- They aren't hard though. It is just written complicated and when there are many exercises to do, you lose the overview
- There are sometimes words in it we haven't learned
- It is not that I don't understand it but the tasks of the assignments are not explained so good and we have too much unnecessary stuff to do
- Yes but sometimes it is too much in some subjects and then we have to make it at home

With regard to the time for completing the assignments, the majority of the students respond that they have enough time. Only about 30 % say that they do not have

enough time for completing their tasks and not quite 8 % say that they sometimes have problems with adhering to deadlines. In the following there are some reasons why students answered with yes:

- Our teacher gives us enough time
- At home or in school
- They give us a deadline so we know how to manage our time
- I work fast
- I'm very quick and do things at home

Students who answered with “sometimes” said that most of the time they are able to complete the assignments but sometimes they cannot finish it. They also justified their answer with the reason that the time permitted is not always the same.

Finally, I would like to summarize the arguments of students who think that the allowed time is not enough:

- Because teachers don't give us enough time
- Too much work
- Teachers don't plan the time well, then we have to hurry up
- There are too many assignments at once, not even one part really finished
- Too much work, less time
- It is hard, to focus on one and doing it probably

Students who said that the time limit is appropriate for them and students, who did not agree, also mentioned that it is dependent on the teacher how well they advance with their assignments.

Class community

Do you think that COOL has a positive influence on your class community?

Why/not?

More than 50 % of students think that COOL has a positive influence on their class community. A considerable proportion, however (43 %), does not think that COOL improves their class community and about 7 % are not sure whether it can help or not. Many students also gave further explanations. First of all, I would like to summarize the positive feedback and begin with more obvious reasons:

- Because we can work in teams
- We learn to work with other people
- Because we have to be together and get on well with each other
- Yes, because the work makes fun and we do things together and talk a lot
- Because you can work with people that you are not talking with a lot with
- We are helping each other

Some students also came up with reasons which were not foreseeable:

- Yes, because everybody copies from a person who finishes the assignment first
- Viele schreiben ab wenn die Zeit knapp wird
- Yes, nobody likes it

It is clear that these arguments do not make much sense with regard to pedagogic purposes of COOL, nevertheless they can reinforce solidarity.

Now I would like to give a summary of the feedback of those who do not think that COOL has a positive influence on their class community:

- we are annoyed of getting these assignments
- not really because you always work with the same people
- no, we do our assignments only in groups
- no we already had a good class community before
- Nobody likes COOL
- Because our class sucks and COOL cannot change this

- No because we work together with our friends and not with other classmates
- No? Why should it have a positive influence? Doesn't make any sense in my eyes

In this respect, I found one feedback answer quite interesting: "... because our class sucks and COOL cannot change this". This is an argument worth consideration. It is true that COOL cannot guarantee to completely change the class community but it can at least improve it. In order to reach this goal it is of course important that students do not always work together with the same people in the same teams. However, this does not seem to be the case in all classes anyway, since some of the students said that they enjoy working with people they usually do not have a lot of dealings with. More reasons for negative answers can also be seen at the next question plus the justifications for negative statements.

Do you enjoy working in teams/groups? Why/not?

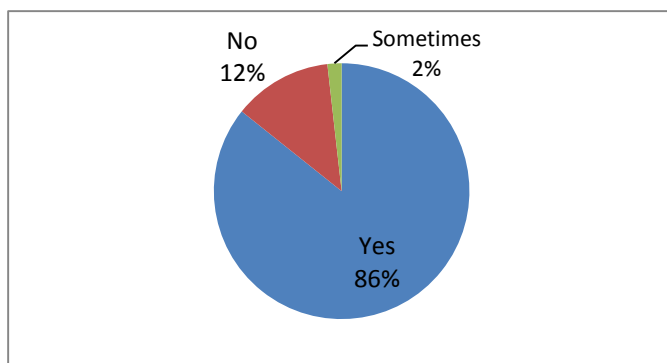


Figure 15: Diagram 5

This question provides the most positive answers. A proud number of 96 students said that they like working in teams, which makes about 86 %. Only 12 % negated this question and a small percentage of 2 % respond that they only sometimes like group work. In all six classes which took part at the questionnaire the number of students who like teamwork was bigger than the number of students who do not like it. All in all only 14 pupils indicated that they do not like to work in teams.

Since the previous question reveals that most students like group work, one can be disposed to accept that a great number of students also think that group work helps them with their assignments. 74 % of all students said that COOL helps them with their assignments. 14 % did not see any advantage with regard to COOL and their assignments. A small percentage of 12 % stated that it depends on the subject and the content and above all – as already elucidated in detail – the members of the group.

Klassenrat

What can you say about the “Klassenrat”? Does it help you to solve problems?

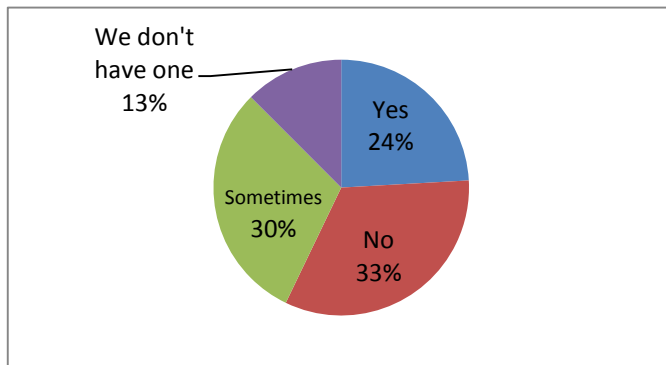


Figure 16: Diagram 6

With respect to the question about the “Klassenrat” one can say that the results are quite diverse. This question was more difficult to analyze than other questions because 24 % of all students answered that the “Klassenrat” helps them to solve problems, 33 % said that it does not help them to solve problems, whereas others were not so sure about their answers and stated “sometimes” and yet others said that they do not have a Klassenrat at all. Since this is a question where many teachers are upset about the result, I would also like to discuss the answers in further detail. After consulting one of the home teachers at HAK Donaustadt, I learned that not all students have the same kind of Klassenrat. One of the third forms is not an official COOL class and they do not have a COOL home teacher and therefore do not have a Klassenrat. Nevertheless, some teachers try to introduce it on a regular basis.

Since the results are diverse I would like to discuss some of the results of individual classes in detail.

Students who answered with “yes” justified their answers in the following ways:

- We talk to each other without fighting
- We can talk about our problems
- We can only find solutions if we speak together
- Yes it helps to solve problems

Some of the students who answered with “no” said the following things:

- Nein es ist langweilig und es geht fast immer nur um Lehrer
- Not really I would rather solve my problems on my own. The thing with the Klassenrat is getting me nowhere
- Not really. Because we discuss the small problems for hours.
- NO! Not in our class! Maybe in others

There were also some students who were not so convinced about the Klassenrat but could not really find arguments against it. At least they had some suggestions for improvement.

- Hilft schon, nur nie genügend Zeit, um Probleme ganz zu lösen, weil zu viele unnötige Sachen besprochen werden
- Yes and no - once we could find a solution for a big problem in the class, but the most time a bit quarrel broke out
- It would help: but in our class not everybody says what they want in the Klassenrat

9.2 Analysis of teachers' overall results

The questionnaire was filled in by nine teachers of the three case study schools, two teachers from HAK Stegersbach, two from HAK Donaustadt and five teachers from HAK Steyr. They were asked to fill in this questionnaire consisting of 16 questions which were structured in four different parts, namely “COOL in general”, “COOL lessons”, “Pupils” and “Klassenrat”. With regard to the general part teachers were confronted with questions concerning their personal opinion about COOL and they

were asked to enumerate positive and negative aspects of COOL and what they appreciate most about it. After that they were asked answer questions about more practical aspects of COOL like talking about preparation necessary for “working with” this new teaching method as well as resources. Two questions deal with appropriate subjects for practicing COOL and if COOL is appropriate for language learning. Furthermore teachers were asked to answer questions about possible obstacles and challenges. The questions of the next part called “COOL lessons” deal with the implementation of COOL at their school, for example, with regard to time management. The focus is laid on students when it comes to the next part of the questionnaire. The last part of the questionnaire is about the “Klassenrat” and what teachers think about it. The teachers’ questionnaire consists of sixteen questions of which are twelve “open questions” and four “multiple choice” questions.

The teaching experience of teachers who filled in my questionnaire ranged from 9 years to about 30 years.

Years of experience	6	9	16	20	30	30+
Number of teachers	2	2	1	1	1	2
Average years of experience: 12 years +						

Figure 17: Average years of experience

The teaching experience in general reflects the experience in COOL because some teachers only have about 4 to 5 years of experience in practicing COOL, whereas others even have practiced COOL up to 30 years.

Years of experience	4	5	6	10	15	30
Number of teachers	1	1	3	2	1	1

Figure 18: Average years of COOL experience

Teachers of the case study schools use COOL for language learning lessons, like English, Italian and German as well as other subjects like History, Ethics, Psychology, PBSK, Personal skills which is also called team development and Business studies.

Seven out of 9 teachers mentioned that they use the English lesson for practicing COOL. The reason why many English language teachers filled in the questionnaire is because some of the questions – at least the question about COOL and foreign language learning – deal with practicing COOL in language classes. Besides English, there were also two other languages mentioned, namely German and Italian. Apart from Ethics and Psychology the other subjects were all related to business or economics.

In the following, I would like to analyze and summarize the teacher's questionnaire results.

COOL in general

When teachers were asked about positive aspects concerning COOL, “Open learning methods” was one of the advantages mentioned. Furthermore, teachers referred to the fact that team work among students is necessary because students have to be/can be more active. Teachers also stated that they like students learning self-evaluation as well as time management. Many teachers appreciate the fact that students learn how to work individually and independently. Other teachers simply stated “competences, responsibility”.

What is also considered positive is the aspect that pupils have to organize their learning. Furthermore teachers appreciate about COOL that students are not just educated with regard to their hard skills but also with regard to their social competences. Apart from the development of soft skills, the teachers like that it raises stu-

dent's attention and they believe that everyone is active when practicing COOL. Moreover they appreciate the structure of COOL.

Regarding their new role as advisers, teachers stated that besides working together with other colleagues, which is considered as a relief because it divides workload, they also enjoy working with students individually. In this respect, they also said that one can observe students' work better. When teachers were asked to state what they appreciate most about COOL, many of them mentioned their new role at school. They stated that they have a better relationship with their students and they love having time to deal with individual students or small groups. Teachers said that they enjoy their new "teaching situation" which offers enough time for students' and teachers' cooperation.

The new learning environment was another point mentioned by teachers. One teacher stated that he likes the positive atmosphere when working in the library or in other rooms rather than always sitting in the classroom.

When it comes to disadvantages of COOL the feedback was diverse. Most teachers wrote about problems they encounter in practice. With regard to problems teachers encounter in practice, they referred to the availability of rooms and computers among other things. Furthermore, it was often stated that many teachers think it is problematic to find time slots for teacher cooperation.

Another problem is that students are not used to COOL and the establishment of this concept at schools can be fraught with problems like problems of conservatism and questions of practicality.

Once COOL is introduced at a school and students are used to it, problems of discipline are noticeable. Free work demands discipline on behalf of the students and often students do not work properly and even forget to work on their assignments. Group work in general very often misleads students. Consequently, they do not

concentrate on their assignments. With regard to COOL this is even more problematic because COOL does not only consist of one group work activity but of entire lessons full of group work. It is said that COOL lessons are often seen as “free lessons”.

There are also disadvantages with regard to the assignments and single tasks. First of all, preparation can be extremely time-consuming. Furthermore, tasks and goals have to be stated very clearly in order to avoid confusion. Since the teacher has the role of an adviser or coach, he/she is not in the centre of teaching any more like in traditional teaching. As a consequence, students are very often confused.

One of the most difficult questions with regard to COOL is the question how to grade COOL assignments. Assessment problems were frequently expressed in the questionnaire; however, many teachers stated that this is the same problem as it is in conventional group work.

The following aspects belong to the group of disadvantages mentioned concerning more general factors. Conservatism was a term which was often found in the teacher's questionnaire in connection to the negative aspects. Teachers who are in favour of innovative teaching methods very often have to deal with teachers who have prejudices against innovations in their teaching methods and represent conservatism. One teacher wrote: “Some teachers are resistant and concentrate on controlling students and not on their learning process.” The term “conservatism” was also very often mentioned when teachers were asked to mention some of the challenges they had when introducing COOL. Introducing something new is always a hard thing to do and one has to reckon that there will be many counterarguments against it. Most of the problems centre on parents, students and teachers. Apart from conservatism, skepticism and prejudices were mentioned in this respect. Of course, every school has its own history of introduction and it needs to be said that some schools had no problems at all when introducing COOL, others experienced more difficulties.

Do you think introducing COOL at your school is/was a special challenge?	
YES	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At first some of us were skeptical about it - Probably yes because of some resistance - Many teachers are against it - Teachers are not used to it - Parents/teachers/students/society still think in really old-fashioned way - Yes it was: school doesn't change easily, teachers don't like the change - <u>Austrian</u> teachers probably hate it 	No, because we had a committed team and support from administration and ministry
	No, because it started in HAS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes, it is difficult to introduce new techniques and even more to stick to them - Some people were afraid of new structures and some had personal conflicts 	

Figure 19: COOL introduction

The fact that it is quite hard for teachers to stick to the new techniques and methods within the scheme of teachers' timetables is also mentioned.

Summarizing, one can say that the problem which is most often considered to be hardest to overcome is represented by the teachers themselves. Some teachers are not convinced of COOL due to several reasons. The fact that there are many conservative teachers at every school is not advantageous at all. Old-fashioned teachers are resistant to new teaching methods and are not willing to cooperate. Convincing those teachers whose thinking is old-fashioned in various aspects is probably the hardest thing to do. One teacher described the situation in the following way:

Teachers are the only obstacles and the fact that they are only in schools for lessons not for work, i.e. working together, preparing materials in co-operation.

Educationalists who are convinced of COOL also reported of teachers spreading rumors about COOL. This being said there are also parents and students who constitute an obstacle because they very often think in an old-fashioned way as well.

The successful introduction of COOL is very much dependent on the timetable. If the timetable does not allow longer open learning sections and if schedules do not allow flexibility a successful introduction of COOL will probably Moreover, some individual teachers took the initiative and tried to convince other teachers of this new way of teaching never be reached or the introduction will be delayed.

Another obstacle is traditional teaching. COOL and traditional ways of teaching are often not easily combinable due to various reasons. Just to give two examples, first of all there is the difficulty of meeting the curriculum targets. Although one could argue that this is always depending on how you see when such a target is met, supporters as well as opponents of COOL in general agree when it comes to this question. They both think that it is often much easier to meet it with traditional ways of teaching. As a second point it is also difficult to organize in terms of time management because a traditionally planned lesson takes 50 minutes, whereas each COOL assignment has its own deadline and does not need to be fulfilled in only one lesson of 50 minutes.

As a last point, teachers wanted to address the aspect that there may be obstacles which are unpredictable. Nearly all of the teachers mentioned something along these lines, for example, that innovations are full of surprises.

COOL teachers of the three case study schools offered solutions how to overcome these obstacles and how to master these challenges. First of all it was generally agreed that teachers need resources for a successful introduction of COOL. They reported that one needs resources, as for every other way of teaching. If a school wants COOL, they have to provide what will be necessary. Many teachers mentioned the topic of infrastructure. What they meant are suitable rooms as an exam-

ple. For practicing COOL one needs extra rooms for studying and computers. Infrastructural possibilities need to be a big talking point before introducing COOL.

One teacher described the ideal situation:

Ideal: notebook, netbook with internet access, a digital microphone and no restrictions concerning photocopies or print outs.

“Appropriate teaching materials that stimulate learning not teaching” was another point expressed in the questionnaire.

Since timing was stated as a factor which needs to be well-conceived in order to allow teachers to meet other teachers and cooperate with them the timetable needs to be scheduled properly and it has to take this method into consideration. At this point I would like to refer to another question of the questionnaire, namely “Do you like to work together with other COOL-teachers?” All nine answers of the teachers coincide, everyone ticked yes at this question, nevertheless one has to mention that some of them made further annotations and stated that this can be difficult at times due to different time schedules.

Another essential factor in this regard is teacher education. Teachers agree that they need special training/preparation for introducing COOL. It was stipulated by one teacher that they should have better didactic training. The vocational school in Steyr, which is known as the initiating school, was often mentioned as a reliable source for further education on the topic of COOL. As mentioned in the theory part, training courses for teachers, called “COOL Lehrgänge” are offered in Steyr, which are seminar sequences of two years. According to the teachers they are extremely helpful. One teacher also expressed the importance of “follow ups for those who already have training”. However, before attending these courses, teachers should not only know the concept of COOL but should also have background information about COOL as well as know the appropriate teaching methods.

What also seems relevant with regard to teachers' preparation for introducing COOL is that teachers learn to prepare suitable assignments. There are guidelines for doing so, however, one should keep in mind that sometimes theory is not enough and practice is needed in order to be successful. According to the teachers it is also hugely important that "newcomers" learn how to assess these assignments.

Giving appropriate feedback and to coach students is not something where all teachers succeed at once. They need special training and it is crucial that they learn how to deal with their new role as a teacher. One teacher explained: "You should professionally evaluate your new role as a teacher". Furthermore it was stipulated by one teacher that they should have better didactic training.

Some teachers also came up with solutions of how to gain all those qualifications for practicing COOL successfully. HAK Steyr was mentioned on the one hand but there are also other solutions. According to COOL teachers, learning from other colleagues is most helpful when already having attended training courses. However, learning from other colleagues is of course helpful even without having attended any special training courses. No matter with or without training courses, in order to do so COOL teachers should visit other reformed, innovative schools. This can be schools in Austria but of course also visits at schools abroad can be very helpful and mind opening.

Here I would like to mention a statement of a teacher who had no training at all, nevertheless she considers herself as a teacher who works successfully with her students in a cooperative, open way. She stated:

Not really. I didn't have any when I started ... I learned a lot from colleagues. What's more important is that the teacher wants to do it. (COOL teacher)

Finally, I would like to mention that there were only two teachers who think that introducing COOL was no special challenge and those teachers had no obstacles at

all when starting to work with this new learning arrangement. The reasons for this are that they had a committed team and had a lot of support from administration and ministry.

Therefore - as a last point - I would like to mention, that according to the teachers, support from the school in general and above all the head master is of great importance. As one teacher stated, “You need cooperative teachers and head masters who back up pedagogy”. Open mindedness with regard to this new learning arrangement is crucial.

Subjects

Concerning the question “Which subjects do you consider as being ideal for practicing COOL?” at least four teachers mentioned that they think that every subject is appropriate for practicing COOL. In one questionnaire PE was named as an exception, another teacher stated, “There are some subjects I don’t know anything about, but I guess it’s doable in every subject”. One further teacher emphasized that subjects like physics, geography, ethics, natural sciences and business studies were especially appropriate for using COOL. Others simply stated: “any really, it doesn’t matter”. A few teachers also gave advices, for example, “Any subject, for more complex issues in mathematics or accountancy it should be used for revision”.

One teacher nicely brought it to the point when he/she said: “Any, just depends on teacher’s attitude towards teaching and teacher’s role.” Here I would like to add that of course it is also a matter of class discipline as was mentioned earlier on.

Four out of nine teachers stated that languages are in particular ideal for practicing COOL. They argued that one can concentrate more on communication which means that students have more opportunities to practice their verbal language skills. This quotation brings me to the next question “Is COOL an appropriate method for lan-

guage teaching/learning?” Here, it seems that the teachers are convinced that COOL is an appropriate method for language teaching and learning. They substantiate their statements in the following ways.

Apart from arguments that are valid for all subjects like competence training and that students have more responsibilities, teachers also mention that students can train different language skills individually. In addition it is often mentioned that students can work at their own speed which is important for all subjects but especially for language learning. Another teacher reported that COOL is especially appropriate for language learning because all skills can be addressed and at the same time students have the chance to learn autonomously, on their own. This is especially practical in an eCOOL setting.

Besides the fact that all skills can be addressed, there is also the advantage of individualized learning. Especially in language teaching differences among students with regard to their language knowledge are hard to compensate and therefore individualized learning offers possibilities which are beneficial.

A number of projects can be dealt with and the main focus can be on oral skills which are usually hard to cover in a traditional way of teaching. Many COOL English teachers give their students assignments which have to be presented when finished and this increases the verbal practice opportunities of the students. Apart from presenting projects using the English language there is also group work where students learn how to use the foreign language in active conversation. They need it for negotiating and stating their arguments or ideas concerning their assignments. In every class there are students who do not speak in front of other people. Those students usually are more likely to speak when working in small groups.

Spontaneous talk in English usually happens very rarely in traditionally planned lessons because there is limited time for students to talk. Furthermore in conversa-

tions with group members they can practice their active use of the foreign language without having the feeling of being controlled by the teacher.

In addition to that COOL in the English lesson can of course be good for doing creative work of all kinds, for example, designing posters.

One English teacher mentioned that COOL is ideal for revising grammar. Those exercises are often combined with other activities or even with other subjects. Interdisciplinary assignments are of great importance with regard to the English lesson since English is a subject which can be combined easily with lots of other subjects. Therefore many interdisciplinary assignments have to do with English language teaching. Examples were provided by COOL teachers of the three schools described and can be found in the chapter dealing with assignments.

Time management

COOL-teachers agreed that time management is certainly one of the most difficult issues. They all stated that managing their time is very challenging and it would be quite advisable for COOL-teachers to accept that some students are done very quickly with their assignments and then do nothing for the rest of the lesson whereas others are still working. Secondly, teachers will probably have to accept that students tend to consider COOL-lessons as leisure time and then have problems with deadlines.

Many teachers simply stated “difficult”, others also explained that it is difficult because sequences have to be planned in advance and flexibility is required to cope with budgeting time – although one could argue that this also holds true for traditional lessons.

Teachers who have more COOL teaching experience report that after a short while, you know how to plan the workload for students. They state observing students' working process is very helpful in this respect.

As a summary one can say that time management is something that not only students (have to) learn when working with COOL but teachers themselves as well. To mention something positive, there were also teachers who stated that time management was/is neither a problem for them nor for their students.

Pupils

When teachers had to answer if they think that students like COOL all the teachers answered in the affirmative except two. One of the teachers stated that it depends on the class and the age of the students. Due to the same reason one teacher answered "some yes, some no". Another teacher believes that pupils in general do not like COOL.

With regard to the positive influence this new learning arrangement has on the pupils' team spirit as well as on the pupils as individuals, all the teachers answered in a similar vein. This means that they are convinced that COOL has a positive influence on the team spirit of the pupils as well as a positive influence on the pupils as individuals. One teacher added that COOL has a positive influence on the pupils as individuals in the long run.

Concerning the question if COOL has a positive impact on future job perspectives of pupils the teachers agreed again. Especially companies like BMW Motors stressed the importance of independence, team spirit and time management of students. Therefore schools started to rethink their system and curriculum and initiated new learning arrangements like COOL in order to train students and develop their soft skills. Teachers who practice COOL think that it has a positive impact on the pupils' future career.

“Klassenrat”

When teachers were asked what they think about the Klassenrat, all teachers answered in a similar vein, namely that they see the Klassenrat as advantageous. However, it needs to be said that the Klassenrat is applied differently in schools and not all “COOL schools” use this method of discussing problems very often.

The answers concerning the Klassenrat can be divided into two groups: teachers of the first group are convinced that the Klassenrat definitively solves problems and teachers of the other group are not sure about that, nevertheless they know that it has a positive impact.

Teachers who believe that the Klassenrat can help to find solutions stated that it is a good way to discuss and solve problems even if it is not always pleasant. Another teacher described it as being not just a good but “a crucial and effective means to discuss problems”. It was also mentioned that it can help if you introduce it properly and if students cooperate. Furthermore, it was stated that the Klassenrat is especially effective in classes with some experience of the method.

Teachers who believe that it does not always help to solve problems but definitively has some other advantages mentioned that it is quite good to teach students to listen, to deal with conflicts and to discuss. Those teachers also said that although it does not always solve problems it makes students reflect on problems. They see other advantages with regard to the Klassenrat because they think that students learn to accept certain difficulties, they learn to respect each other and they learn to understand each other better. To sum this up in one sentence, one can say that with the format of the Klassenrat students learn how to communicate their problems and reflect them, they learn rules of conversation and they learn that they have to accept certain difficulties and they have to make compromises sometimes.

10 Conclusion

As stated in the abstract this diploma thesis deals with new teaching methods in contrast to traditional ways of teaching with special attention paid to foreign language teaching. Approaches like learner autonomy and task-based language learning get compared to traditional ways of teaching. The main focus is laid on COOL, a new teaching and learning arrangement introduced in Austrian higher vocational schools during the last decade. The paper discusses how it is implemented and practiced at Austrian vocational schools. The primary interest of my research was to investigate the field of progressive education and analyze COOL, as an example of one approach to progressive education in particular. In order to do so I did case studies at three schools and distributed questionnaires among teachers and students who practice COOL.

The field research offers precious insight into innovative Austrian schools and their daily school life where COOL is practiced complementary to traditional methods commonly-used in the Austrian school system. First of all, it needs to be mentioned that not all traditional teaching methods are old-fashioned and have to be considered negative since most teachers have valid reasons for using them. However, progressive education, especially in the field of foreign language teaching, bears advantages. In the past, numerous educationalists have been reacting on the changing nature of society with changing teaching methods.

Secondly, the results of the questionnaire clearly show that students, in contrast to COOL teachers, are not totally convinced of practicing COOL. On the one hand there are students who seem to be absolutely successful in their autonomous learning which supports the theory of the learner autonomy. On the other hand many students appear to be strongly dependent on the teacher's traditional teaching support. Nevertheless, this does not mean that students, who are unable to take over full control of their learning themselves, do not enjoy practicing COOL nor that they do not see any advantages at all. When having a closer look at the results, one realizes

that the majority of students do like most of the elements of COOL such as group work or student centeredness. Students appreciate these new methods that allow them to work in groups without the traditional supervision by their teachers. Managing time autonomously and experiencing varied lessons are other theoretic aspects which are considered positive in practice. Certainly, there are multiple advantages when it comes to new teaching methods like COOL or the task-based language learning approach but still one should not completely neglect learners' opinions about it. The results of the questionnaire also confirm that a pure focus on new teaching methods at Austrian schools would probably not be an ideal teaching strategy.

Therefore, I come to the conclusion that combining traditional teaching methods with modern approaches to foreign language learning offers a solid foundation for an interactive, varied and above all diversified foreign language learning lesson. Furthermore, both types of learners, those who are fond of traditional methods and those who prefer open forms of learning (see questionnaire results, especially question number 1), may benefit from this combination. Conclusively, I think that the way COOL is practiced at Austrian schools nowadays can be seen as such a combination of traditional and modern teaching methods, offering a solution to many problems discussed in this paper.

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12 Appendix

12.1 COOL – Questionnaires

COOL - Questionnaire

Dear COOL-teacher!

In the course of my diploma thesis with the title „English language teaching: between tradition and innovation“, I want to focus on the new teaching method called COOL. To gather empirical data on this topic I decided to do a questionnaire among teachers (and pupils) who practice COOL at Austrian HAKs. Hereby I kindly ask you to fill in the following questionnaire.

Thank you!

Angelika Friedl

Personal information

School.....

Subject(s)

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

How long have you already been practicing COOL?.....

Which subjects do you use COOL for?

Questionnaire „COOL“

COOL in general

1. What are the positive aspects concerning COOL?

.....

2. What are the negative aspects concerning COOL?

.....

3. What do you appreciate most about COOL?

.....

4. Do you think introducing COOL at your school is/was a special challenge?
Why/not?

.....

5. Which subjects do you consider as being ideal for practicing COOL? Why?

.....

6. Is COOL an appropriate method for language teaching/learning? Why/not?

.....

7. What can you say regarding resources for a successful introduction of COOL?

.....

8. What can you say about obstacles for introducing COOL?

.....

9. In your opinion, does a teacher need special preparation for introducing COOL? If
yes, which?

.....

COOL lessons

1. Do you like to work together with other COOL-teachers?

.....

2. What can you say about time management in COOL lessons?

.....

Pupils

1. Do you think that pupils like COOL?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

2. Do you think that COOL has a positive influence on the team spirit of the pupils?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

3. Do you think that COOL has a positive influence on the pupils as individuals?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

4. Do you think that COOL has a positive impact on future job perspectives of pupils?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

“Klassenrat”

1. What do you think about the “Klassenrat”? Does it help you to solve problems?

.....

COOL - Questionnaire

Dear COOL-students!

In the course of my diploma thesis with the title „English language teaching: between tradition and innovation“, I focused on the new teaching method, called COOL. To gather empirical data on this topic I decided to do a questionnaire among teachers and pupils who practice COOL at Austrian HAKs. Hereby I kindly ask you to fill in the following questionnaire.

Thank you!

Angelika Friedl

Personal information

☐ male

☐ female

Age

Name of school

Grade

Which subjects in your class use COOL?

Questionnaire „COOL“

COOL in general

1. Do you like COOL?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

2. What do you like about COOL?

.....

3. Does a cooperative, open way of learning help you to memorize the content better compared to the traditional way of teaching and learning?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

4. Do you learn to work independently?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

5. Do you learn to cooperate with other colleagues?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

6. Do you learn how to manage your time?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

7. Does COOL help you with learning English?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

8. Do you think that COOL has a positive impact on your future job career? Why/not?

☐ yes ☐ ☐ ☐ no

.....

Assignments

1. Are the assignments easy to understand? Why?

.....

2. Do you have enough time to complete those assignments? Why?

☐ yes

☐

☐

☐ no

.....

Class community

3. Do you think that COOL has a positive influence on your class community? Why?

.....

4. Do you enjoy working in teams/groups? Why/not?

☐ yes

☐

☐

☐ no

.....

5. Does group work help you with your assignments or do you rather feel disturbed?

.....

Klassenrat

1. What can you say about the "Klassenrat"? Does it help you to solve problems?

Peer Feedback - South Africa-Presentations – from

Group-topic:.....

members	presentation technique (4P)	information/content can be understood (4P)
---------	--------------------------------	---

Group-topic:.....

members	presentation technique	information/content can be understood
---------	------------------------	--

Group-topic:.....

members	presentation technique	information/content can be understood
---------	------------------------	--

Group-topic:.....

members	presentation technique	information/content can be understood
---------	------------------------	--

Group-topic:.....

members	presentation technique	information/content can be understood
---------	------------------------	--

Group-topic:.....

members	presentation technique	information/content can be understood
---------	------------------------	--

Assignment 2

COOL - Assignment for BIOLOGY+ENGLISH

Class: 3AS 2010/11 - Nr. 5 in English

handed out: Jan. 20, 11 - for English and Biology lessons until deadline

Deadline – Feb. 10, 2011

Title: Energy&Environment



Aims

- to boost your wordpower on the topic in order to be able to discuss environmental topics
- to understand the problems of energy generation and environment
- to think about your personal energy consumption
- to have a good contribution that presents also your opinion for **your portfolio**

Control –

- + **Revision of words - February 10th!!!!**
- + **Conversation class concerning the contents – Febr.10 and 11**

Materials are available in all English and biology lessons

TASKS and further instructions











- + Tasks are to be found on the “Stationenplan Energy”
- + you may work in groups as you like
- + when you do games/quiz sheets do them in pairs and ask your teacher for solutions
- + While working keep **a personal wordlist** for your test on Febr.4 and for your portfolio!!!
- + **Doing the compulsory tasks (Pflichtstationen P) is maximum “befriedigend”**
- + The contents of this assignment will be part of your next test (2nd semester) and your final exam in June!!!
- + Include a personal feedback on how you feel about the topic and describe your process of working in about 100 words and add your time management (on an extra sheet) – this is an important document for your portfolio

Stationenplan - 3AS E/BOW - ENERGY

Ausgabe: 20.1.2011 Abschluss: 10.2.2011

Station Nr.	Thema/Aufgabe	Pflicht/Wahl
1	Global Warming Take the 2 worksheets and solve them with the help of the 5 green information sheets .(there are 2 sets of the green sheets)	P
2	Sources of Energy Find answers to the questions below. For information see Wikipedia in English! Which ways of generating energy do you know? Which are the renewable energy resources? Which are used in Austria?	P
3	Wordpower Energy Choose as many of the game sheets There are 6 different games sheets (in 5 copies each) you like to boost your vocabulary for the topic ENERGY	W
4	Green Resolutions for a Happy New Year Browse through the material given to get good ideas. With a partner design a nice leaflet with your suggestions	W
5	Ecological footprint Explain what the ecological footprint is and interpret your personal result. Ask your teacher for info-material in English. What can you personally do to save energy? Write a text of about 100 words	P
6	Fossile Energieträger Fülle das vorliegende Arbeitsblatt mit einem non-permanenten Stift sorgfältig aus. Beachte die Kohleproben.	P
7	Begriffsklärung Ordne den entsprechenden Begriffen die jeweils richtigen Erklärungen zu	P
8	Leitfaden zum Spritsparen Lies dir die 12 Tipps aufmerksam durch und suche dir 3 davon aus die du relativ rasch verwirklichen möchtest	W
9	Elektrische Energie Beantworte die vorliegenden Fragen unter Zuhilfenahme der entsprechenden Unterlagen (BOW-Buch&Schemas)	P
10	Atomenergie 3. Wodurch/Woraus entsteht die Energie die in Atomkraftwerken gewonnen wird? 4. Nenne mindestens 5 Gründe warum die Kernkraft keine zukunftsfähige Energie sein kann.	P
11	Erneuerbare Energie Beantworte die folgenden Fragen und setze dich mit den bereitgestellten Objekten auseinander	P
12	Energielotto Suche dir eine/n Partner/Partnerin und stellt euch Fragen aus dem bereitgestellten Energielotto	W

Assignment 3

	5AK – 2009 /2010		<h1 style="margin: 0;">ASSIGNMENT</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">No. _____</p>
Handed out:	Handed in:	Assessment:	Material: Spotlight
	Aims: <i>I can find and present arguments</i> <div style="text-align: right;">    </div>		
How to do it	 Tasks		
<p>👤 = on my own</p> <p>👤 = on my own</p> <p>👤 👤 = partner</p> <p>👤 = on my own</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the article: "Waiting for change"(Spotlight 1/10 pp.28/29) Dot down the gist of this article Find two arguments pro Obama keeping his promises and two against and write them down Write down your own point of view Ask two people what they think (write down who you asked and their opinion) Present your finished task in front of the class <p>How did you like it?    </p>		
Any further comment:			
Mag. Gertraud Krammer			

Assignment 4

ARBEITSAUFTRAG



SchülerInnen:

Ausgabedatum: 12.1.2012

Klasse: 1AK

Abgabetermin: 12.1.2012

Fächer: E/D/GEO/PH/BW/F/SP

laufende Nr.: 01

LehrerInnen: Scherhammer/Cermak/Peham/Schöngruber/
Holzer/Mayr/Neuhauser/Steininger/Egger/Moritz/Frisch

Thema: Child Labour



Lernziele:

Ich kann...

... im Team arbeiten.

... die Zeit für meine Arbeit richtig einteilen.

... selbständig Informationen beschaffen und aufbereiten.

... ein Thema präsentieren sowie sachliche Inhalte kreativ umsetzen.

Genaue Arbeitsanweisungen:

- Arbeitet in Gruppen (3-4 Personen)!
- Die Arbeitsaufgaben sind teilweise in Englisch bzw. Deutsch zu bearbeiten.
- Die Gesamtarbeitszeit beträgt 4 Einheiten + Präsentation 1 Einheit.
- Die Präsentation erfolgt als Stationenbetrieb. Erstellt dazu mindestens ein Plakat und ein Handout (1 Seite).
- Wählt ein Land und bearbeitet dazu nachfolgende Arbeitsaufgaben: Peru, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Mali, Congo, Bolivien, Ecuador, Haiti.
- Nicht vergessen – Reflexion am Ende des Arbeitsauftrags!!!

Aufgaben:

SP/F Fact file - información básica sobre el país de tu grupo (dónde está, mapa, informaciones generales sobre lenguas, población, religión, ...)

Fact file - information fondamentale sur le pays de ton groupe (où il se trouve, carte, informations generales sur la langue, la population, la religion, ...)

www.wikipedia.de, www.derreiseuehrer.com → auf diesen Seiten findet ihr die Informationen auf Deutsch und in eurer Fremdsprache (durch Klick auf die jeweilige Sprache oder das Wappen)

Achtung: Ihr sollt wissen, was die Informationen auf Deutsch bedeuten, um sie auch den Schülern der anderen Fremdsprache erklären zu können!

20 Min

ARBEITSAUFTRAG



BW	Nehmt eine Einteilung der Wirtschaft des von euch gewählten Landes nach Wirtschaftssektoren (primär, sekundär, tertiär, quartär) vor. Zeichnet ein Kreisdiagramm und tragt die Prozentanteile ein. In welchen Sektoren sind häufig Kinder beschäftigt? Was sind die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen von Kinderarbeit im Allgemeinen? (mind. 4 Aspekte)	30-40 Min
D	Hilfe für Kinder: Schreibt einen appellativen Leserbrief an UNICEF, in dem ihr um Unterstützung für „euer“ Land bittet.	30-40 Min
GEO	“child labour”: What is it? Why? What different forms? Find out what types there are in “your” country and try to find advantages/disadvantages of the fact. good sources: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/siteaz/a.htm , http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/kidsweb/world/index.htm	30-40 Min
PH	“Arbeit” ist ein sehr vielfältig verwendeter Begriff! Aber was bedeutet Arbeit im physikalischen Sinn? Mit welchen Einheiten, Symbolen und Formeln wird sie beschrieben? Welche Formen der mechanischen Arbeit gibt es? In welchem Zusammenhang stehen Arbeit und Energie? Wie unterscheiden sich Arbeit und Leistung? a) Klärt diese Fragen mit Hilfe der zur Verfügung gestellten Bücher oder mit dem Internet www.leifiphysik.de/web_ph8_g8/grundwissen/01arbeit/formeln/formeln; www.lernstunde.de/thema/arbeitsenergie/grundwissen.htm; www.frustfrei-lernen.de/mechanik/mechanik-arbeit; b) Fertigt eine einfache Versuchsanordnung/Vorrichtung an, mit der das Thema gut illustriert und allen anderen gut erklärt werden kann.	30-40 Min
E	‘Role Play’: Find a picture of a child in your chosen country, give him/her a name and tell us about his/her working day in form of - a simulated interview or - a fictitious story about the daily routine!	40 Min
Feedback	Ich habe den Arbeitsauftrag gelesen, verstanden und den Abgabetermin zur Kenntnis genommen:	

Curriculum Vitae

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Persönliche Daten:

geb. am 26. Sep. 1986 in Güssing, österr. Staatsbürgerin, röm.-kath., ledig

Schulbildung und derzeitige Beschäftigung:

Derzeit Diplomandin, 2. Studienabschnitt f. Lehramt Englisch und PP
2005 Beginn des Studiums f. Lehramt Englisch und Psychologie, Philosophie
2001 - 2005 Oberstufenrealgymnasium Oberschützen
1997 - 2001 Unterstufengymnasium Oberschützen
1993 - 1997 Volksschule Stegersbach

Sonstiges:

2010/11: Beschäftigung als Lehrkraft für Englischnachhilfe beim
„Lernquadrat“, Wien 19

Sprachen:

Deutsch: Muttersprache
Englisch: mündlich fließend, schriftlich sehr gut
Französisch: Schulkenntnisse
Spanisch und Latein: Grundkenntnisse

Wien, Mai 2012